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INTRODUCTION

[P.145-A]

114 .12 THE PRESENT SURVEY was originally written as a thesis for the Institute of Social Anthropology at Oxford University and submitted in 1956 for the degree of Bachelor of Letters (B. Litt.). It is difficult, having just completed for publication a monograph based on my own field work, to undertake the publication of a thesis written in student days, dealing with the same area but based on the work of others. It inevitably leads to self-conflict, for the new self does not always agree with the old. Further, the survey does not claim to be comprehensive. It is presented, however, as a first step in the gathering together of the earlier literature that can be best relied upon for information concerning the social structure of the Mbuti Pygmies of the Congo. It has two major objectives.

121 127 One, and the most important, is to set down in English a straightforward description of such ethnographic facts as are known about the Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri Forest, based on the published and unpublished material available up to 1956, with the addition of a few references up to 1960. For the Putnam material I am most indebted to Mrs. Anne Eisner Putnam, who made available all the notes left by her late husband, Patrick Tracy Lowell Putnam.

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121 The other objective is an evaluation of the selected material, a consideration of the problems it raises, and an attempt to resolve some of the more evident contradictions.

114 12 Further reasons for publication of this survey, despite subsequent intensive field research, are, first, that my later field work (1957–1958) was concentrated primarily on making a detailed study of a single hunting band, so there is still no general structural study of the Ituri Pygmies. Also, the results of my more recent study will be better understood in the light of this survey, from which it drew its inspiration.

114 Second, despite the extreme importance of the Mbuti, one of the few remaining hunting and gathering peoples in the world, virtually all the published scientific material is in German, Dutch, or French, with the exception of Schebesta's three early travel books: "Among Congo Pygmies" (1933), "My Pygmy and Negro Hosts" (1936a), and "Revisiting my Pygmy Hosts" (1937). The only original work in English dealing with the Mbuti, up to 1961 in fact,

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114 must confess to leaving out such references
128 wherever it seemed plain that the whole passage referred to that one authority. The impression of inadequacy is heightened by the fact that almost the entire bulk of the material available is general and descriptive rather than specific and analytical. In trying to sift that which falls properly into the latter category, then, we necessarily must abandon the continuity and sense that existed in the original works. It is therefore not to be expected that the present survey will in any way offer a coherent ethnography of the Mbuti.

• 121 Fifth, in the course of the survey (pp. 194–
114 241) I make similar use of the unpublished notes
127 of Patrick and Anne Putnam and expand their account of the net hunters with a limited amount of material from my own field notes dating from 1951 and 1954-1955. My own interest during those two first visits to the Ituri were other than strictly anthropological but concerned certain aspects of social organization. As I was working in the same area as the Putnams, the material is valid and useful for the rounding out of their observations. In

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114
• 121 this way the survey points up the major differences and similarities between the two Mbuti groups (the archers and the net hunters) and opens the way both for more intensive limited studies and for comparative work.

Sixth and last, a survey such as this seems necessary in order to clear the ground of the confusion of contradictions and uncertainties in our present sources. The diversity of opinion, in itself important, proved to be of the utmost significance for my own later field work. Although it is somewhat begging the question, it might be said that only by accepting the contradictions as fact, then seeking a structural means of resolving those contradictions, can we begin to approach the truth of the situation. The survey, in this way, may be taken to point the direction in which further field work is needed. This is as true now, since my own field trip of 1957–1958, as it was then. That trip, concerned mainly with a localized band of net hunters, confirmed much of the general thesis of the present survey concerning the differences between archers and net hunters. However, detailed studies of other bands, both archer and net hunter, are vitally needed if we are to arrive at an understanding of the nature of Mbuti society as a whole and of its relationship with villager society.

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The latter problem, that of the relationship between the two neighboring peoples, is of the greatest importance and has been subject to the greatest misunderstanding. It should be emphasized that the opinions cited here, including my own, are opinions and are to be accepted only as such. It should also be realized that the situation is by no means static. Not only has the relationship between the Mbuti and the villagers been changing even during the years since I have known them, but so, in all probability, has the internal structure of Mbuti society. It is quite possible that such change has long been a characteristic of the area, and it is almost certain that the Mbuti-villager relationship has never been static, which may account for some of the diversity of opinion, and a general historical perspective undoubtedly helps us to evaluate the rather sketchy material at our disposal.

We have, for instance, a steady regression in factual knowledge of the area from the time of our earliest Egyptian sources right up to the beginning of the present century, at the turn of which our ignorance of the African Pygmies was just about complete, even to disbelief in their

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114 derstandable, more valuable, and more usable.

• 121 An examination of all the available source material indicates very clearly the necessity for immediately establishing a limited study of well-defined groups, uninfluenced by any theoretical preoccupations with questions of sociological unity, anteriority, or origin. The term "Pygmy" leads far too easily to meaningless
[101] generalization. It may well prove that even the term "Mbuti," by which is understood the Pygmy population of the Ituri Forest, is too broad. The breakdown in this survey between the different economic groups of Mbuti is only a tentative investigation to discover significant similarities and differences.

114 In view of the existence of Schebesta's (1938,
122 1941, 1948, 1950) major work, "Die Bambuti-Pygmäen vom Ituri," with its special reference to archers, and my own field work and recent and forthcoming publications on the net hunters, the survey here has been kept to reasonable dimensions and does not pretend to give a complete picture. The accounts of Schebesta and Putnam are presented with as little speculation as possible. It will be readily seen that there is insufficient information, almost throughout, for any effective analysis to be made. But certain problems arise, and in the conclusions some attempt is made to outline these further, particularly the nature of the Pygmy-villager relationship.

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.121 The immediate need is for further field studies, for which there is considerable urgency. We have, in the Ituri Forest, a people who are still living one of the earliest forms of life lived by man: hunting and gathering. The extent to which the Mbuti live this life varies from one group to another, but we cannot expect to find a pure hunting and gathering economy among them much longer. For some thousands of years 179 the Pygmy lived this life free from any outside 175 influence. In historic times various village tribes [174] invaded his forest, bringing different cultures and different economies with them. More recently the Pygmies have been in contact with European civilization, which has already driven one major road, and a number of secondary roads, right through the forest. Luckily, no effective attempt was made by the Belgians, until the last two years of their administration, to change the Mbuti way of life, and there is still ample forest to permit a hunting and gathering 179 economy. What emerges from a study of this 182 [P.147 B]

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Zaire FO1

tic or racial differential. It might be well to define how certain other terms are used.

CAMP: This term distinguishes the settlement of the Mbuti from that of the villagers. There may be hunting camps, those situated in the forest and from which hunting is conducted, or village camps, those occupied by the Mbuti when they are visiting their villager neighbors.

BAND: This refers to the total Mbuti hunting population, regardless of kinship, that recognizes and utilizes a common hunting territory. The band may occupy a single camp or split into several camps within the same territory.

VILLAGE: The settlement of the Bantu and Sudanic cultivators who have pressed into the forest. Such a village is likely to have a much more clear-cut kinship composition and political identity than an Mbuti band.

VILLAGER: This term, unless otherwise stated, may be taken to refer to any of the cultivators in the Ituri Forest, Bantu or Sudanic, with whom the Mbuti have contact. The use of the different tribal names, such as Bira, Ndaka, Lese, and so forth, would not only be unnecessarily cumbersome but suggest that the relationship varied significantly according to the structure of each individual villager tribe, whereas it seems, for the moment at least, that

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the basis of the relationship is the fact that these tribes are village cultivators and not forest hunters.

LINEAGE: We adhere to the definition and usage suggested in "Notes and Queries on Anthropology" (1954, 88–89). The definition is given as follows: "A lineage consists of all the descendants in one line of a particular person through a determinate number of generations."

CLAN: Similarly, we use this term as suggested in "Notes and Queries" (1954, 89–90) whereby clan members may trace their unilineal relationship through one line or the other, i.e., we do not use it in the sense of a matriclan as opposed to a gens. Further, we here regard the lineage as a subdivision of the clan, lineage members being able to trace their membership to a known ancestor. A number of such lineages hold themselves to be related by the common descent of the lineage ancestors from a remote, possibly fictional or totemic ancestor.

GROUP: Whereas I have in the original sur-

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GROUP: Whereas I have in the original survey, and elsewhere, used the term "group" as I now use the term "band," particularly when translating from the German (*Lokalgruppe*), I now use the term "band" as above, and use "group" only generally to distinguish, say, archers from net hunters, or Mbuti from villagers.

THE BANTU PREFIX: This has been dropped throughout whenever I refer to persons or objects. Thus we talk of the Bira, Ndaka, and Mbuti rather than the BaBira, BaNdaka, or BaMbuti. This change is in consonance with the current practice of the International African Institute. However, we retain the "Ki" prefix to indicate language—KiBira, KiNdaka, KiMbuti.

Indigenous terms, except for place, proper, or personal names, are italicized.

Illustrations have been added. These do not set out to represent the total material culture of the Mbuti, but were drawn from the collections of the American Museum by Mr. Nicholas Amorosi.

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ORIENTATION

LOCATION

101 THE PYGMY POPULATION of the world is di-
114 vided into two main groups, Asiatic and African, commonly known as Negritos and Negrillos, respectively. These terms originated in what is probably the first serious attempt to study the Pygmies as a whole (Quatrefages, 1887), and the relationship between these two groups has been an issue ever since. It does not concern us here, as our study is confined to the African Pygmies, but reference to this wider issue may be found in Quatrefages (1887), Le Roy (1897), Schmidt (1910), Eickstedt (1934), and Gusinde (1942).

TRIBAL GROUPINGS

•121 We are concerned essentially with an ethno-
101 graphic study of known Pygmy groups in Africa, but here again the field is generally considered in terms far too broad to be practical.

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221 Ep. 166-A
361 From Schebesta (1952, 148–149), it would seem
[184] that archer camps are very much more variable
both in size and duration. Although their time
[261] is fully occupied by the requirements of their
[251] hunting and gathering existence, the Mbuti
never have any fear of shortage and conse-
181 quently have no need to store. Theirs is a
182 strictly diurnal economy. This fact, and the
abundant way in which the forest satisfies their
basic needs, not only directly affect their ma-
terial culture (and indirectly their social
structure) but also, to some extent, their social
behavior and their religious thought.

192 The present report is not the place to pursue
• 121 the question of the effect of environment on
personality and behavior, a study more prop-
erly in the field of psychology than social
anthropology. But it is worth emphasizing the
probable importance of the environment in this
respect, as it becomes especially significant
when we study the religious life of the Mbuti.

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• 121 It is also significant in considering the relative systems of values of the Mbuti and the villagers, in so far as it develops certain qualities in the Mbuti that further accentuate their physical difference from their village neighbors. Just as the forest itself stands out in sharp contrast to the plains, so the forest people stand out in contrast to the plains people—even those who have made a notable adaptation to a forest environment such as the Ituri village tribes. The value in emphasizing the importance of environmental considerations lies not in any causal explanation of material culture or social structure offered by such considerations, but in creating an awareness of this very fundamental opposition.

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Putnam, and nearly one decade in the case of Anne Putnam. 114

The vital gaps in this combined material, together with its general nature, render any attempt at systematization fruitless. As it is presented, however, it stands as a body of facts, more or less reliable, related to two specific types of Mbuti society—archers and net hunters. We can use it initially, then, to test the validity of this classification. Second, the survey suggests a new approach to the relationship between the Mbuti and their villager neighbors. Incidentally it throws a clearer light on Schebesta's notions as to the cultural unity of the Ituri Mbuti and on the irrelevance of his division of the Mbuti into linguistic groups which correspond only to villager groupings, and not directly to any significant structural differences among the Mbuti themselves. Here we concern ourselves with a brief comparison of our two major sources, section by section, with reference mainly to the classification of the Mbuti according to hunting technique. 128 121

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A fourth factor might be added: While the net hunt quickly scares animals away from the area around the hunting camp, necessitating frequent changes of site, the archery technique neither depletes the game so quickly nor frightens it away. An archer band can therefore remain confined to a smaller area, near the village, while the net hunters sometimes must wander several days' march away from their patrons. The more nomadic group also has constantly fresh supplies of vegetable growth at its disposal, thus decreasing the need, which is apparently felt by the more settled archers, for plantation products.

Thus at once we can see the possible economic, social, and political implications of the difference in hunting technique and how these implications follow in fact.

Gathering occupies a similar position of social and economic importance in each type of community. It is regarded primarily as the work of women, though, wherever it calls for tree climbing, it is undertaken by men. Among

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INTELLECTUAL AND ARTISTIC LIFE

184 53 There seem to be no significant points of divergence between archers and net hunters under this heading, except in theory and interpretation of their rationale. In music the archers make much more use of instruments than do the net hunters. Schebesta does not give details of the types of archer song such as given for the net hunters, which does not mean, of course, that such a classification into sacred and secular, for men and for women, does not hold equally well among the archers. It is simply one [121] of the many points on which we need more field data, and it may prove to be an extremely important point when it comes to trying to unravel the contradictions, implicit and explicit, in the material on religious life.

RELIGIOUS LIFE

721 184 114 Here, as in the previous section, the similarity of fact is far greater than the dissimilarity, though this may be obscured by the contradictory nature of various interpretations of the facts. It is here that Schebesta's work is more open to criticism, as it is here that his bias is strongest and here where the material most easily lends itself to interpretation in the light of bias. Costermans (1938) raises an extremely [575] important question when he questions Schebesta's assertion that the *torí* society is an in- [192] tegral part of the religious system of the archers [196] and that Toré is applicable as a term for God.
[p 248-3]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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[p. 248-C]

and that Toré is applicable as a term for God. 000

As there is confusion, even among the Mbuti, on questions of religious terminology we can do little by pointing to this or that context. We must go a great deal further and try to discover something of the underlying system of values. In the light of such an inquiry we shall be able to assess better the significance behind the outward differences between the two groups; for instance, differences over the performance of ritual, differences in magical practice, and others. Here we cannot be content with a comparison of outward behavior, for we are dealing with a world of symbolism, and in that symbolic world we can fruitfully compare only the values that underlie the symbols. To do so leads us into the very much wider field of study that is broached in the succeeding and final two sections (pp. 249–272). By attempting to understand something of the Mbuti system of values we may not only hope to understand the significant differences between one type of hunting band and another, but also we may hope to get some idea of the real relationship between both kinds of band and their villager neighbors.

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Schebesta (1950, 13) insists that there is a 184
cultural unity among the Ituri Mbuti, which 114
he believes is clearly visible in their magico-
religious system. He may well be right. Proba-
bly he is, but his method of comparing termino-
logical usage among a number of different
Mbuti bands as though he were dealing with
self-evident facts, while relying frequently on
casual information, does little to support his
theories. When dealing with cult practices, he
is more concerned with the origin of a particu-
lar practice than with its sociological signifi-
cance. He accepts statements and even legends
at their face value and builds his elaborate the-
ories on this flimsy foundation.

In trying to draw any useful comparison be- 184
tween the material on the archers and that for 121
the net hunters, we are constantly confronted
with the question of origin. Is this or that cus-
tom or ritual of villager origin? If so, how far [17]
has it been adapted and what significance has
it? The latter question is more important for the
social anthropologist than the former and is
precisely the question we must ask. We are con-
cerned not with the origin of any particular rit-
ual but rather with its significance and its rela-
tionship to other practices in a system of related
institutions. Thus when we deal with religious 000
[P 248-D]

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177 Thus when we deal with religious (or any other) institution common to both villager and Pygmy, we necessarily deal with the relationship between these two people. Unless we understand this relationship we cannot possibly understand the institution. We can understand the relationship only by observing something more fundamental than the origin of a particular practice in a specific group, let alone the more obvious facts concerning the trade relationship. As indicated in the present survey, even the *nkumbi* initiation cannot be taken at its face value as far as the Mbuti are concerned.

No aspect of Mbuti life brings the people into more effective contact with their villager neighbors than the field of magic and religion. It seems that this is the field therefore in which we should attempt to understand the systems of values underlying the relationship between these two people.

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THE MBUTI-VILLAGER RELATIONSHIP

121 177 439 [128] In the preceding sections we dealt with the survey briefly, mainly in order to test the validity of our classification of the Mbuti into net hunters and archers. We deliberately avoided, as far as possible, reference to the Mbuti-villager relationship, although in the final section on religious life it became particularly obvious that this relationship could not be ignored. In Mbuti society a number of institutions in one way or another are associated with or appear to be identical with villager institutions, and we must understand this connection. The only alternative is to assume that the relationship between the two peoples is one of straightforward symbiosis based on an exchange of meat for plantation products and that, in the course of this symbiosis, certain customs have been adopted and are practiced either separately or jointly. This often-drawn picture represents only the outward appearance of the facts. When one tries to understand it as part of a coherent system, however, it can be done only by creating a hypothetical Mbuti social system that is in fact a hodgepodge culled from all over the Ituri area, from which any offending portions are plucked with the excuse that they are of villager origin.

121 177 We must determine, then, the underlying facts, as opposed to the mere outward appearance: the extent to which various institutions have been adopted by the Mbuti; how far their underlying values have also been adopted, or

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[D. 249-C]

how far only the outward form of the custom has been taken over and the values rejected. The most we can do is to clear the ground for such a study. We do so with reference only to the Epulu net hunters (unless otherwise stated), as our information is fullest here.

In the first place, what are the major points of contact between these two poeple? They may be listed as follows:

Material culture
Trade
Magical practice
Dance and festivity
Intermarriage
Ceremonial attendant on birth, puberty, marriage, and death

Material Culture

The adoption by the Mbuti of various villager items of material culture or technological skill has only one significance for us, which is the extent to which it places the Mbuti in a dependent position. This is difficult to estimate. It is difficult to visualize the Mbuti without metal and hard, though quite possible, to visualize them without plantains. But, even among the net hunters, luxuries tend to become necessities, and we must admit of the trend, if not the accomplished fact, toward economic dependency on the villagers.

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as yet assumed village values in name only, and only for the duration of their contact outside the forest where their own values do not apply.

This interpretation of the function of the *nkumbi* initiation ceremony as providing an outward symbol of the association of two neighboring peoples that, for one reason or another, come into contact and cooperate is very similar to the interpretation by Peristiany (1951, 299) of initiation among the Pokot and Karamajong: "The recognition of a common system of age ranks by these two neighbouring peoples permits them to move with ease in each other's society and allows, during peace-time, the extension of social bonds and the obliteration of cultural frontiers."

In the Ituri such a statement could also apply to relationships not only between Mbuti and villagers but between neighboring village tribes themselves, such as the Ndaka, Bira, and Lese.

We indicate above that the *nkumbi* could not be considered as "initiation" by the Mbuti who practice it, as it does not admit them to any exclusive (villager) association or to any exclusive system of values, except possibly on a superficial level. We also suggest that the

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[P. 259-C]

lage often comes to an end. After a few days or weeks of drinking and dancing, one evening the drum-dance is replaced by song, probably a subdued hunting song sung by a group of dejected-looking Pygmies sitting around a fire in their village camp. They get increasingly melancholy until one evening, probably a day or two after they have stopped drum-dancing, they start singing *molimo* songs. The next morning they are suddenly full of life again, and, despite all protests from the villagers, they pack their few belongings and return to the forest, singing loudly as they go.

The evidence considered suggests that there is a dissociation of two sets of values for the Mbuti—those that apply to the village and those that apply to the forest. The two sets of values, corresponding to two worlds, are accompanied by two modes of behavior. It is a case of culture contact without acculturation; such villager institutions as the Mbuti seem to adopt are adopted and are significant only with reference to their village life. The relationship between the two people is, on the one hand, characterized by various attempts to formalize it through trade, participation in various ceremonies and activities, and, on the other hand, it is characterized by a sharp opposition of two different sets of values. This opposition is an opposition of the forest to the non-forest; the humans, to the animals; the Mbuti, to the villagers.

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of villager legends. The legends of tradition are somewhat more original and are told in a slightly less summary way but still without any great show of interest or enthusiasm. 539 128

Most of the tales concern the Mbuti and their relationship with the three planes of existence that they acknowledge: the human, animal, and supernatural worlds. By various notable omissions and commissions they add to our understanding of their social and religious life. Whether the tales are villager in origin or not is for the present purpose not particularly significant. In practice they are never told the same way twice. They are often spontaneous creations arising from a certain set of circumstances, or they may be adaptations of dimly remembered tales, or of traditonal villager tales, again made to fit certain sets of circumstances. One of the weaknesses of the present collection is the absence of such surrounding details. 539 [82] [772]

A full analysis of legends and the circumstances under which they are told, together with a similar analysis of other Mbuti arts, such as music and drama (al vitally important means of expression to the Pygmy), would give 539 121.

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us a body of facts on which we could draw in a study of the Mbuti system of values, joining such an analysis to a more formal anthropological study. It is not intended to attempt such an analysis here; there is insufficient detail and further field work is needed. However, a study of the legends we have at our disposal, if it cannot provide the detailed systematization we would like, does at least give us a clearer picture of Mbuti values than could be had by merely observing their behavior.

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1. Creation Myths: Legends of Origin and Tradition

539

As mentioned, for the Pygmy these subjects seem barely worth mention in legend. I give all three legends that deal with creation and with the sun and moon. None concerned the stars.

The Water and the Earth

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Many, many moons ago the Water was down below, and the Earth was way up in the sky. When it rained it rained dirt, and the dirt ruined all the water vegetables and spoiled all the water food, so that it had to be thrown away. The Water said to the Earth: "You are spoiling my water gardens by raining dirt. You come down here and I'll go up there."

The Earth agreed, and so the Water moved up and the Earth came down. When they had changed

[P. 260 - D]

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538 Mbuti on the food quest, their lack of interest
171 in the past, with a corresponding lack of inter-
181 est in lineage or tribal ancestry, and an opposi-
tion typical of forest people between the animal
and the human worlds, more significant differ-
[186] ences appear in the legends. One such difference
is, of course, the way the Mbuti tend to class
the villagers with the animals, in association
with the spiritual world, the world of trickery,
[178] in opposition to the human world. Then there
is the contrast between the Pygmy attitude to
the forest as the provider of all that is good as
well as bad, and the attitude of the villagers
who regard the forest as a place to be feared,
the abode of evil. This contrast is heightened by
the different magical and religious approaches
538 of the two people. The legends tend to confirm
182 the validity of my suggestion that the prime
701 function of the Mbuti magico-religious system
171 is to maintain normality in the relationship be-
tween the people and the forest. The villagers
seem more concerned with disorders and ab-
normalities and appear to have no such use of
song as that I have described for the Mbuti,
making greater use of witchcraft and sorcery.

538 To understand the meaning fully in each type
121 of legend, we need to know who told it, to
whom, with what accompanying mime, to what
effect, and under what circumstances. Given
such surrounding details, we could use legends
and allied arts to analyze that extremely diffi-

I: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P. 272-87]

cult subject of sociological study, the magico-religious system. In the absence of such details we can do only as we have done above and indicate some of the general tendencies in the legends, where emphasis is given and where it is lacking, without being able to attempt any formal systematization. Even so, from this collection of legends there seems to be ample justification for supposing that the rejection of villager values which we saw in the *nkumbi* is real and not a mere psychological reaction. It is in fact an integral theme running through the legends. If the opposition is such as we suppose, it accounts for the lack of responsibility manifest by the Mbuti toward their villager hosts at all points where the two people come into contact.

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The legends further emphasize the sanctity of the forest. This emphasis is one of the main ways in which the Pygmy maintains his distinctness from the villager. But the importance of the forest is not confined to the Mbuti-villager relationship. It is the central theme of the Mbuti magico-religious system, a glimmering of which we get in the legends relating to the supernatural, a system that is evidently quite distinct from that of the villagers, despite the common usage of certain names and practices. At this point perhaps, the two people are farthest apart.

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CONCLUSIONS

[D-273-A]

121 128 We set out to make an ethnographic survey of material on the Mbuti of the Ituri Forest, to evaluate that material, and to see what problems it raised and which direction further field work should take. Rather than attempt to record the material from all sources, we used only the material that added to our knowledge of two specific groups of Mbuti—the archers of the southeastern Ituri Forest and the net hunters of the Epulu District. The rest of the material consists largely of isolated descriptive remarks which cannot always be accurately associated with any one particular region, let alone any particular group or band of hunters. Its inclusion would have added nothing to the sociological value of this work.

114 The material on the two groups to which we limited ourselves is by no means adequate either. Schebesta's information for the archers is to be regarded with caution because of his admittedly preconceived notions and his faulty methodology and field-work technique. The

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Zaire FO1

values. To the Pygmy, however, these same practices are meaningless, as they do not conform with his own notions of the forest world. There is, consequently, a hiatus in the relationship between the two people or rather a hiatus between their relative systems of values and their structural relationship. For a proper understanding of the situation we need a great deal more data, the gathering of which should be one of the foremost tasks of any field-work project.

With reference to such a project, there appear to be two main needs. First, there is a need for detailed studies of representative hunting bands, both archer and net hunter, and of their relationships with their villager neighbors. Second, we need as large a number of such studies as possible for purposes of comparison, not only according to economic technique, but according to other possible systems of classification by structural principles or by degrees of affiliation to different villager tribes. The second need will be fulfilled simply by an extension of the first project. This initial project must necessarily cover not only a single band but other hunting bands with which it is associated through bonds of marriage or for any other reason that may become apparent. At the moment, the single hunting band appears to be the major effective political unit. Such single hunting bands are loosely associated only through

[P 275-B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P. 295-C]

marriage or very rarely through cooperation in the hunt, this latter sometimes accompanying a process of fission or fusion. In the course of such a study it should appear how far all these bands unite in terms of values in opposition to the villagers. This question will be further extended when we come to study another such loose association of hunting bands, that which utilizes one or other of the alternative hunting techniques. (21)

Thus we shall be studying the social structure of individual hunting bands and the structural relationship between different bands (presumably but not necessarily utilizing the same hunting technique). The structural differences and relationships between one type of hunting band and another should then appear and the identity or difference in their systems of values. In the course of the study we shall probably accumulate material for a comparison of the relationships of these different groups to their villager neighbors and will learn what generalizations, if any, can be made about this relationship.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

It would seem advisable to begin by working in the communities already covered in the survey, checking and verifying the known information and filling in the numerous gaps. It should be possible by an eastward extension of the study of the Epulu net hunters to reach the point where they come in contact with a westward extension of the archers in the southeast of the area. The Pygmies ("Aka") in the north, of whom little is known at present, should certainly be included in the study, in so far as they can be fruitfully compared with the net hunters and archers. We should then at least know whether or not we are justified in using the term "Mbuti" to include all the Ituri Pygmies as a single cultural entity. It may prove that we are no more justified in studying them together on account of their outward physical similarity than we would be in regarding the Dinka and the Nuer as a single people simply because they both have long legs.

121 • [101]

It seems unnecessary even to consider the question of origin or of "purity." We are interested in the situation as it is. We can consider the past only in so far as we know it with certainty (which is not very far), or in so far as it plays a part in the beliefs, attitudes, or values of the people we are studying, in which case it is

[P 275 - D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P 276-A]

• 121 part of the present situation. Nor need we be concerned whether any one group is more "acculturated" than another. In any case, the adoption, or otherwise, of villager institutions or language seems to be a poor index to the degree of assimilation involved. Nor can we assume that the simpler society is necessarily the purer, as parasitic organisms are usually simpler in structure than their hosts, who take over the function of certain parts of the parasite. The parasite community, while maintaining an outward separateness from the host, loses much of its own vitality and originality. On the other hand, the community that is taken over

1: Turnbull 3-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P 276-B]

quickly and fully integrated, say, on a definite basis of division of labor, may well retain much of its original structure because it is still a fully live organism living a complementary rather than a dependent, or even partial, existence. 121 •

Eventually, then, the study should include such well-integrated groups of Pygmies, or Pygmoids, as the Kango, on the western edge of the Ituri; the Twa and the Tswa; and other Pygmy groups toward the west coast. We should then have some opportunity for seeing how far the term "Pygmy" has any anthropological meaning, but first we have to discover the same truth about the Ituri Mbuti.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1959) 1965 PO4 Pygmies PO4
Mbuti

[P. 3]

CHAPTER 1

Objectives

The general purpose here is to add as much as possible to our knowledge of the Mbuti pygmies and of their much misunderstood relationship with the neighboring tribes of forest cultivators. The account is drawn from first-hand field experience, and is primarily intended to be of use to anthropologists. [2] •

In the belief, however, that anthropologists are human beings, and that other human beings might equally well find much of interest in works of this kind, the currently fashionable academic jargon has been discarded. Such jargon in most cases only obscures what are often essentially simple basic truths, and so another objective is to present an academic study in plain language. I cannot claim to have been thoroughly consistent, for to have striven too hard would have led only to an equally artificial form.

Even so there may be those who will object, for the mystery, formerly obscured by an abuse of the English language, in this way becomes unveiled and accessible to all. I hope that what I say is plain, so that others may more easily and more usefully take issue with it. Before embarking on the account itself, however, a certain amount of ground-clearing for purely academic purposes is necessary.

LIMITATIONS

It is important at the outset to define very clearly the objectives of the present study, so that its limitations may be plainly understood. Both the objectives and the limitations were a carefully preconsidered part of the field project, and form an integral part of the subsequent analysis. The reasons for accepting such limitations were, I believe, insuperable in the given circumstances.

The title perhaps indicates a wider scope than is covered by the work, but it is believed that there are good grounds for using this

2: Turnbull E-S (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

study as a comparative base from which the study of the Mbuti as a whole may be more speedily and accurately advanced. It is also believed that although the bulk of the study involves a single hunting band, much of the basic structure uncovered applies to other Mbuti bands. The major limitation, however, is that we are here concerned primarily with one band rather than with the Mbuti as a whole, yet this was an inevitable necessity.

Other limitations arise from the lack of monographs on comparable groups of forest nomads, from my consequent reluctance to generalize too far from so narrow a base, and from the difficulty of presenting the principles of organization of a society that does not possess the formal institutions found in larger and more sedentary societies. Nonetheless, such principles plainly must exist, and while our general objective is to outline the form and structure of the Mbuti hunters and gatherers of the Ituri Forest in the northeast Congo (Leopoldville), we also have the more particular objective of searching for the elusive principles that integrate each apparently autonomous Mbuti band, giving it an identity of its own by which it recognizes itself and its integral but diffuse relationship with other bands. For it is in light of these principles that we must try to understand the effective but problematical relationship that pertains between any Mbuti band and the village cultivators who are its neighbors.

Another limitation derives from the lack of reference material on the Mbuti, which necessitated the gathering of ethnographic minutiae in the field and their presentation here, adding considerably to the bulk despite vigorous sifting. However, without a firm ethnographic base no analysis would be possible, so the provision of such a base is considered a prime prerequisite.

I have elsewhere (Turnbull, 1956) given reasons for rejecting existing sources for both purposes of general comparison and particular analysis, though this is not to deny their possible value in other fields. My own subsequent account of the Mbuti (Turnbull, 1961) was in no way intended as an academic study, nor is it suited for use as such, though it served a useful purpose in helping the field worker detach himself from the subject of his study, enabling him to examine it more critically.

In my examination of other sources (1956) it was suggested that subsequent field work might discover a more meaningful division of the Ituri Mbuti than the linguistic division made by Schebesta, as

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

the languages referred to, although spoken by the Mbuti, were evidently of non-Mbuti origin. Consequently another objective of the present study, based on further field work, is to begin to look for valid structural differences that do exist, following up the contention (*ibid.*) that one would expect to find such differences between the Mbuti who hunt by net and those who hunt with bow and arrow. The boundaries of the net-hunters and archers incidentally correspond, very roughly, to the linguistic boundaries drawn by Schebesta between the Sua- and Efe-speaking Mbuti: the Aka, to the north, although somewhat divided amongst themselves, offer a third category, some of them using the spear as their prime weapon.

To all these ends it was decided to make a further field trip in which one hunting band would be studied intensively throughout a calendar year, and in which as much comparative material as time and field conditions permitted would be gathered from other hunting bands. It was decided in advance, in the light of previous personal experience, that the sacrifice of a whole year to the study of one small band was essential, even though it would mean that any final conclusions about the general nature of Mbuti society would have to be delayed until a number of other such studies had been made. A band of either archers or net-hunters is a highly mobile, volatile entity, demanding of the field worker the utmost persistence in both physical and intellectual pursuit. It was quite obvious, also from previous experience, that the band not only constantly changes location, but it also constantly changes in composition. The significance of these fluctuations would only be discovered, it was felt, by following them right through their course in one given hunting territory before attempting any comparative studies among other bands. Above all it was essential in one band to find out what the significant social groupings were, and what principles enabled them to maintain any kind of consistency and continuity in the face of perpetual change. How was the band divided, along exactly what lines did the characteristic splits occur, what forces operated to hold the band together and to divide it? The scope of the one-band study was aimed at answering such questions and others that concern band relationships with local villages of cultivators. It was hoped to arrive at an understanding of the true nature of the over-all Mbuti/Villager relationship in this area, following up on the suggestion made earlier (Turnbull, 1956, 363–64) that this relationship was not one of master/servant, still less of slavery, and probably not even of symbiosis.

2: Turnbull E-8 (1951-1966) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

121 In paying special attention to this relationship it was felt that the otherwise intangible value-system of the Mbuti would be more clearly revealed, leading to an understanding of the ritual relationship that appeared to exist between the Mbuti and the forest, as implied in the accounts of other observers and in my own prior experience, but nowhere made explicit.

EXECUTION

114 131 Field work was undertaken between the summer of 1957 and the late winter of 1958, entering the then Belgian Congo by driving through from the West Coast, collecting as many local accounts of pygmy or pygmoid hunters and gatherers along the way as possible, for future reference. Such accounts were gathered in Dahomey, Nigeria (particularly towards the east), the Cameroons, Gabon, and throughout the Congo, but few hunting bands were encountered until well towards the Ubangi River (see Map 1). It was decided not to spend time trying to make contact, except on the far side of the Ubangi, where contact was relatively easy, and where there were also some Binga pygmies from the west bank of the river.

114 13 [144] From the Ubangi over to the Ituri it was quite obvious that, as elsewhere, true hunting bands only existed where there was substantial primary forest, and that elsewhere not only was the hunting and gathering economy defunct, but there had been so much intermarriage that one could not truly speak of a pygmy physical type any more than one could speak of a pygmy culture.

Leaving aside the forested area south of the Congo River, which I did not cover but for which pygmoid groups are reported, I found relatively isolated bands of pygmy and pygmoid hunters and gatherers to exist in the forests of the Gabon and the Cameroons, and in the Congo Republic (Brazzaville) as well as in the forested regions around the Ubangi River. But by far the heaviest concentration is [101] in the Ituri Forest, where all the pygmies recognize their unity in the name Mbuti, and where both the physical and the cultural integrity of the hunters and gatherers seems to have been best preserved.

121 There was no question that this was the right area for the major bulk of the field work, but there was some question as to which band to select for the intensive study. I eventually decided on the Epulu

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1966) 1965 PO4 Pygmies PO4
Mbuti

net-hunters for a variety of reasons, their central location (see Map 2) being only one.

There were several more immediate reasons, which I give now, as the choice may be a point of some criticism:

1) I had already been among this band on two prior occasions, and had established with them a most friendly relationship that I knew would guarantee me immediate access to their forest hunting camps. Although I was known among other bands, there did not exist the same degree of intimacy and trust, and the Mbuti are by nature reserved and suspicious when faced with the prospect of having a stranger in their forest camps.

2) I was also well known to the Epulu villagers, and could anticipate the need for understanding and tolerance from this direction.

3) Father Schebesta (1957) had previously attacked my discussion of the significance of the music and ceremonial (Turnbull, 1955, 1957[1]) by saying that this same band was particularly acculturated and therefore not representative.[1] As the whole point of my argument was the superficiality of the acculturation, and granting that this band had all the appearances of gross acculturation, this seemed like an excellent opportunity for testing a hypothesis that I felt to be valid, and that I also suspected to have far deeper significance in the total Mbuti social structure than I at present recognized.

4) In selecting a net-hunting band I would at least be adding to Schebesta's general ethnographic description, which was mostly concerned with the archers, rather than be duplicating it.

5) Because of its central location I would be able to move relatively rapidly to other areas in the forest if the occasion demanded, and when in other areas I would still be able to stay within a few days' reach of the Epulu band, in case I needed to return. Also because of its central location, there seemed to be some possibility of establishing contact not only with other net-hunting bands, but also possibly with archer bands, in the normal course of the year's migrations.

6) The continued existence of Camp Putnam, on the Epulu River, offered me a base where I could keep essential supplies in safety, and where I would not alienate myself from the villagers with whom I would eventually have to work by having to stay at a government rest-house or with other Europeans.

[1] For a further clarification of Schebesta's attitude, see my article on the nkumbi initiation (Turnbull, 1957), his rejoinder and subsequent recantation (Schebesta, 1958, 1963).

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1956) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

hour before dawn, then be up at dawn in preparation for the hunt. This much I could manage, but whereas during the day individual men could stretch out and snatch an hour or two of sleep whenever they felt like it, I never had the chance to feel the same freedom. Acts associated with the *molimo*, such as the ritual gathering of food from every hut, continued throughout the day and I did not wish to miss anything new that might happen.

However, with all its drawbacks (and perhaps the physical and mental strain are not the least) the technique seems in this instance to have been justified by the results.

RESULTS

Both the general and the particular objectives were answered to some extent during the course of the field work. The general form and structure of the Mbuti hunting band became evident, as did certain differentiations between the structure of the archers and that of the net-hunters. Further, certain principles were found that accounted for the cohesion of the band within itself, while at the same time enabling the band to present to the villagers a structure so fluid that any formal relationship of the kind envisaged by the villagers was impossible. Perhaps it is as well to point out here that the kinship system (or lack of it) that characterizes the Mbuti band today is not necessarily representative of what it was yesterday; indeed it may well be that the current ambivalence is in itself a response to the attempts of the patrilineal village society to enforce control through the myth of hereditary unilineal relationships. The origin does not concern us here, only the system as it exists in the present context.

The structural differences between archers and net-hunters are not perhaps as wide as might have been supposed, but before any final conclusions can be drawn there is great need for a detailed study to be made among the archers. Certain differences in behavior are shown, however, to achieve the same structural ends—for instance the process of fission and fusion, where the net-hunters and the archers behave in diametrically opposed cyclic patterns but to the same structural end.

The detailed study of the Epulu net-hunters was backed by sufficient field work among other net-hunting bands to enable us to generalize with reasonable safety. Where generalization is not possible, I cite the specific, and where it is possible but not with absolute cer-

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

tainty, then I cite supporting evidence; otherwise it may be taken that generalization for all net-hunters is considered valid. In point of fact there seem to be few differences of structural interest.

Enough work was done among archer bands to get some idea of the extent and nature of the structural differences to be expected between them and the net-hunters, but again I must emphasize the considered need for further studies, one of which should include a detailed study of an archer band over a similar period and with similar intensity, and another of which should tackle the Mbuti/Villager relationship from the village point of view. Finally, there is need for detailed studies of the various local village tribes, at which point those who are interested may begin to sort out which elements of the present Mbuti culture may be considered as original, and which as borrowed.

The over-all picture is one of a society where the lack of formal structure is so evident that one wonders why there is not complete disintegration. There are not only no chiefs or councils of elders, but no ritual specialists, and no lineage system that in any way contributes directly to order and cohesion. There is no legal system, and no body of belief in supernatural sanctions. The secret begins to reveal itself when you look at the band one day, to see what it really *is*, and look at it the next day and find it is something else.

As suggested above, the constant state of flux that characterizes the Mbuti band may be in response to the attempts of the villager cultivators to assert a formal relationship with it. The lack of chiefs and the lack of priests and the lack of unilineal descent system certainly prevent the formation of political, ritual or domestic ties, and as stated elsewhere (Turnbull, 1956) the economic relationship is one of mutual convenience rather than of dependency. What emerges that seems to be of particular significance is the central theme of the forest, a theme that not only orders the hunting and gathering world of the Mbuti, but also divides them from the world of the villagers as if dividing the sacred from the profane.

If social flux is what prevents the formation of a relationship that would necessarily involve the subordination of the Mbuti to the villagers, the central value of the forest is what maintains internal stability and cohesion, at the same time determining the relationship of opposition with the outside world. This opposition in fact creates a kind of voluntary indigenous system of apartheid, where two peoples live side by side, exploiting the same environment in totally dif-

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

ferent ways, with totally different values, with only the minimum of contact, and that based on nothing more than territorial propinquity and mutual convenience. In this way each is able to extract some benefit from the presence of the other without sacrificing its integrity, while maintaining a sense of absolute superiority that, however illusory in terms of economics or politics, is thoroughly justified by the opposition of the value systems.

The fact that this opposition does not erupt into open hostility is due largely to the size of the forest, which can easily support the two populations and the two economies. But the moment some element upsets the precarious balance, rendering one economy or the other ineffective, then collision will be inevitable; and insofar as it is the hunting and gathering way of life that is most likely to be affected, the onus of change will be upon the Mbuti, and they are the ones who, because of the intimate relationship they have with their forest environment, are the least fitted for change. The present study will indicate in some measure the extent to which the Mbuti society is capable of assimilation or adaptation, and the extent to which change can come to it only through subordination or extermination.

Considerable space is devoted to setting out a fairly straightforward ethnography of the Mbuti. This is considered essential because of the present paucity of information that can be used for the kind of analysis here envisaged. The details may seem unnecessarily minute at times, and there are certain total blanks, but the picture is given as fully as possible so that the closeness of the reliance of the Mbuti on their environment may be recognized. And insofar as the environment or territory is going to take precedence over political systems, instability over stability, music over sex and death, and mere age over kinship, it is felt that all the available evidence, however slight it may at first seem, is going to be needed.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 PO4 Pygmies PO4
Mbuti

197 selves from neighboring pygmies, place names are more likely to be
101 used than the terms Aka, Efe or Sua. Although I have formerly used both BaMbuti and Bambuti, I here use the form Mbuti, as this eliminates difficulty in accurately representing singular and plural forms, and is in keeping with the current practice of the International African Institute.

101 In previous writings and occasionally in this work, the term "Ne-
144 gro" is used to differentiate the pygmy hunters from the immigrant farmers, but it now seems far better to use the term "villager," for the significant difference, as seen by the people concerned as well as seen by the anthropologist, is one between a forest people and a village people; the racial factor is structurally negligible. Precise tribal names cannot always be used, as in some villages the tribal composition is mixed, and as any one band of Mbuti may have contact with two or even three different village tribal groups.

• 121 I have made other modifications to my earlier terminology, neces-
128 sary simply because of increased understanding. I now use the term "band" where previously I used the term "group" to refer to a unit of Mbuti hunters, who, regardless of their kin relationships, recognize and share a common hunting territory. As will be seen, the term refers more to territorial boundaries than to the boundaries of kinship. The term "group" I now employ to refer generally to one villager group as opposed to another; i.e., Sudanic and Bantu, say, or to distinguish between all net-hunters and all archers. But wherever used, it is used only in its general sense, the context making its meaning plain. It does not have any specific academic significance, not being a translation, for instance, of Schebesta's (1948, p. 291) "Lokalgruppe."

By "family" is meant a nuclear family of a man, his wife and their sociologically recognized children, who are cared for and brought up in all respects in the same way whether or not they are biological offspring. The terms "clan" and "lineage" do not enter much into our analysis of actual Mbuti kinship, but are used as theoretical concepts by comparison with which we can more satisfactorily understand the Mbuti system. A discussion of their meaning is, then, an integral part of the test.

In the course of discussion of the magico-religious system, certain usages specific to the situation will be defined; here I would just mention my own understanding of the terms "ceremony" and "festival." "Ceremony" has, when I use it, the connotation of formal ritual, of an established pattern of behavior that must be followed according

2: Turnbull E-5 (1961-1968) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

to rule if the ceremony is to be effective, whatever its purpose. By "festival" I mean something rather different. It in no way necessarily implies an annual or regularly recurrent event; its objectives may be precisely the same as those of a ceremony, but the means employed are different. There is no precisely regulated pattern of behavior. On the contrary, there is an important element of spontaneity that gives the occasion a vital immediacy, keeping it in the current context rather than connecting it with the past. I confess that the term "festival" has, for me, other less easily definable connotations that make it more suitable for use in the Mbuti situation, the most important of these being that it implies wider, freer participation, less pomposity and more enjoyment, an abandonment that is almost subversive with respect to the commonly accepted norms of behavior.

Most important, I have to revoke my earlier usage of the term "Essumba" or "Lusumba" (Turnbull, 1955, 1957[1], 1957[2]). The context in earlier writing, I hope, makes it plain when I am referring to a magico-religious festival of the Mbuti as distinct from a ceremony practiced under the same name by the villagers. The misleading terminology employed before my last field trip was due in part to the difficulties of the linguistic situation and the fact that I was then using the lingua franca, KiNgwana, as my major means of communication. The importance and significance of the confusion will appear later in the text, but as I now wish to use a terminology that will clarify the situation as much as the actual linguistic confusion permits, I have to state that wherever in the past I have referred to the magico-religious festival of the net-hunting Mbuti, in which the men play a predominant part, and where I have used either "Essumba" or "Lusumba," it would have been more correct to have used the term *molimo*. Even this term, however, has its counterpart in the Bira *molimo* ceremony, but at least we can now distinguish more easily between both of these and the other local ceremonies known variously as *essumba, lusumba* and *ishumba*, which ceremonies are connected primarily with the Ngwana villagers and their earlier slave-trading and ivory-collecting practices.

One last small correction of past usage; whereas before I once or twice (Turnbull, 1955, 1957[1]) used the spelling *Alima* for the festival associated with the puberty of Mbuti girls, I now use the form and spelling *elima*.

2: Turnbull E-3 (1951-1960) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

ETHNOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

121 There are two major difficulties facing any discussion of the Mbuti. One is the fact that while they are true hunters and gatherers, they are nonetheless associated in some way, and apparently closely so, with the surrounding forest cultivators. The inseparability of the two peoples makes it especially difficult to know where to begin, as the Mbuti are one thing in one context and a quite different thing in another context.

114 The other difficulty lies in the fact that previous sources have not given us a clear idea of the structure of either group, Mbuti or villagers, and have completely misled us as to the nature of the relationship between the two. I have dealt somewhat with the latter difficulty elsewhere (Turnbull, 1956) and propose to deal with the former difficulty by giving a brief sketch of the nature of Mbuti society that will adequately provide a basis for a preliminary investigation of the actual nature of the relationship between the Mbuti and the villagers. Only then can we safely attempt to understand the nature of Mbuti social structure, even in their forest society, as divorced as it may seem to be from the village context.

161 It is impossible to give an accurate estimate of the population of the Mbuti of the Ituri Forest, as there has been nothing approaching an efficient census. Owing to the mobility of the individual hunting bands, and the lack of co-operation offered by villagers whenever queries are made about the number of Mbuti they "own," we must regard with suspicion any figures based on a count of bands attached to villages and an average band population. From my own experience, and from discussion with missionaries and administrators who have attempted counts, one way or another, I would hazard a guess at somewhere around 40,000, with no evidence to show that the population is increasing, but certainly none to show that it is decreasing.

619 The total population may be divided, as we have seen, into groups 224 that emphasize one hunting technology or another, the two main groups being the archers and the net-hunters. The spear-hunters also use bows and arrows for defense as well as for occasional individual hunting. None of these groups can be said to have any political identity, however, any more than can the Mbuti totality, except in opposition to the villagers.

521 The only effective political unit is the band, which we have defined

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

discussion. The discussion is not entirely haphazard, but once again the structural factor is elusive.

When first we look at the religious life of the Mbuti we feel the pulse beating clearly. The *elima* and the *molimo* are outstandingly evident as institutions connected with crisis, but the moment we try to analyze their function the best becomes less distinct. Here the picture is again confused by the fact that the villagers have similar names for ceremonies of their own that are alike enough to lead to the assumption that the Mbuti adopted these institutions into their own disorganized framework. Then the pulse stops altogether.

I suggested earlier (Turnbull, 1956) that part of the answer lay in a vital opposition between the two worlds of the Mbuti, the forest and the village. Recognizing that opposition is no less a relationship than any other form of relationship, we can at least theoretically separate the two worlds temporarily, if they are truly in opposition, and study them apart. Using this device we are free to look at the Mbuti in the village context almost as though this were their sole existence, and discern there what system we can. We are also free to examine the same people in the forest context, living in small nomadic hunting bands, virtually independent of the village world. But by looking at the village world first, when we turn to the forest world we shall be able to follow the Mbuti not only as they move from one hunting camp to another, but also when they abandon the forest for a brief spell in the village, seized by a whim, by the desire for relaxation, or by their taste for village foods, wine and tobacco. In this way we shall arrive at a better understanding of both worlds of the Mbuti, and of the actual relationship between them. We shall also, in the process, test our hypothesis of opposition, and, if it be proven, discover the elusive principle that binds together the otherwise apparently lawless, leaderless, un-kin-conscious forest society.

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2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4 Mbuti

[P. 33]

CHAPTER 3

The Mbuti/Villager Relationship

THE QUESTION OF DEPENDENCE

Although we are primarily concerned with the structure of Mbuti society, there are a number of valid reasons why we should first concern ourselves with the relationship between the Mbuti and the villagers. 121 • 648

For one, this has been the area of greatest misunderstanding and this misunderstanding has consequently affected attitudes toward an understanding of the forest hunting and gathering life of the Mbuti even when apart from the villagers. It is widely believed that the Mbuti are subject to village authority, that they are a subordinate people. This belief rests on the assumption that the Mbuti are dependent upon the villagers, and the theory of dependence has been extended to political and ritual fields as well as economic. The exact degree of dependence is something that we have to examine carefully throughout our study, though we can only take it up specifically after we have considered the Mbuti in both the village and the forest worlds.

The notion of dependence has led to the theory that Mbuti culture, such as it is, is in itself derived from the superordinate village culture, and we shall see that this is far from the truth. Even when we look at the Mbuti in the village world it is not hard to see the superficiality of his alleged acculturation, for the very willingness with which he adopts village institutions and falls in with village ways leads him inevitably into one contradiction after another, which contradictions are possible only because the institutions do not have the same structural significance for the Mbuti as for the villager. 121 179 *

The cause of the misunderstanding is largely that previous accounts and investigations have been derived from experience of the Mbuti in the village context, in almost complete ignorance of even 121 14

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

the most general nature of the forest context and in absolute ignorance of the structure of the forest world. But this in turn leads to another reason for considering the village world first, for the universality of the misconception and its common cause are in themselves highly significant. The misconception, that is to say the notion of the Mbuti as a subordinate and dependent people is, although a myth in actuality, nonetheless a structural factor of the greatest importance, and it is the relationship of the Mbuti to the village world that leads to some of the most interesting elements in the over-all social framework of Mbuti society as it is today. It is not our intent to say what elements of Mbuti society are caused by their relationship with the villagers, but it is certain that many elements, such as the constant process of fragmentation, fission and fusion, take on special significance in light of that relationship. Even the most central religious institutions, sacred to the forest, appear to be in the process of adaptation, allowing for and encouraging a widening of the Mbuti social horizon, bringing about a wider sense of unity (both religious and political) than apparently existed before.

Ostensibly the relationship is based upon the economic dependence of the Mbuti on the villagers for food and metal. Both manioc and bananas (sweet as well as plantain) are grown throughout the Ituri region and jointly form the staple. Both foods are eagerly sought and consumed by all Mbuti, who in the forest have nothing akin to the banana or to the large manioc root. The small, sweet forest *itaba* root has to be grubbed for, and, as the Mbuti say, it is much easier to get manioc from the villagers. Other village foods consumed by the Mbuti are groundnuts, corn, rice and beans but, as for the villagers, they are supplementary. Any of these foods may be carried off to the forest camps and consumed there. Indeed in any village on almost any day one is likely to see a pygmy woman or two filling her carrying basket to capacity with such foods and returning to the forest camp. If the hunting camp is nearby, a regular supply line is maintained, and even forest food becomes supplementary in Mbuti diet.

When in the village the Mbuti also have access to luxuries such as palm wine, and to certain trade goods; tobacco and second-hand clothes are the most important such items.

Having no knowledge of metalworking,[1] the Mbuti are without a

[1] A few Mbuti prisoners were taught by the Belgian administrator at Mambasa how to hammer arrow tips as part of his campaign to "liberate" the Mbuti from their dependence upon the villagers.

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doubt wholly dependent upon the villagers for all metal goods. So also with pottery, there being absolutely no knowledge of pottery manufacture among the Mbuti.

But it is significant that none of the authorities who cite the lack of these foodstuffs and metallurgical and ceramic skills among the Mbuti as an example of their economic dependence also cite the absence, among the Mbuti, of all knowledge of fire-making.[2] By the same reasoning this should make them dependent on the villagers for matches. The point is that mere lack does not constitute a necessary structural dependence, unless the lack is vital. We have to ask ourselves how *necessary* is this apparent economic dependence of the Mbuti upon the villagers.

It will be shown in the section on "The Forest World" that there is no question of any absolute dependence of the Mbuti upon the villagers for food, in that context, except insofar as luxuries ultimately tend to become necessities. It will be seen that in the forest their technology is sufficient to keep them supplied with all their basic needs. It will also be seen that metal is not a necessary part of their technology, any more than is pottery, or knowledge of fire-making.

In the village world, however, the Mbuti are completely dependent upon the villagers. Hunting and gathering in the neighborhood of any village are likely to be equally poor, and it would be difficult if not impossible for an Mbuti band to keep itself supplied with forest foodstuffs from a village headquarters. It would involve a half day's march, at least, to reach a suitable hunting area, and the physical effort alone would be enough to discourage even the most ardent hunter. But even more important is the fact that by living in the village the Mbuti would be out of touch with the forest, and would have no way of knowing the exact whereabouts of the game at any given time. Living in a hunting camp with the forest all around them, the Mbuti know only what is going on in their immediate vicinity. As the game moves

[2] Some Mbuti have learned to use matches, when available, and a few know of the fire drill from contact with their village neighbors. There is absolutely no indigenous method of making fire, however, and it is a point of no small importance to their social life that each household maintains its own hearth. Embers from this hearth are carried, usually by the woman, wrapped in fire-resistant leaves, during the hunt or while on the trail. At each new camp site, the family hearths are kindled from embers of the old family hearths, preserving a distinct sense of continuity. Whenever a communal hearth is required, as for the *molimo*, communal participation is accentuated by the compulsory contribution of embers from each family hearth. Whereas matches are rarely used, becoming quickly damp and useless, even if available, they are *never* used for kindling family or communal hearths, but only for such relatively mundane purposes as lighting a pipe or cigarette.

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the huts and the shafts for spears; the ax is used for enlarging the boles in which bees make their hives, so that the honey can be extracted more easily. Younger Mbuti do not know what they would do without the machete for cutting saplings. Both they and the older men realize that the ax is not absolutely essential, and I have seen ax-shaped clubs used for breaking away the wood from around a hive, where the wood is rotten, as it frequently is. The older men say that if they did not have machetes for cutting saplings they would use stone tools, but they have no knowledge at all of how to make such tools, and are probably prompted to make this remark by the presence in the forest of early stone axheads.

Accepting, for the moment, that the Mbuti in their forest world are not in any position of necessary dependence upon the villagers for food or material, or technological skill, and admitting that in the village context they are dependent, the question arises as to why they choose to place themselves in that position of dependence. It is certainly not out of economic necessity. The truth of the matter is simply that the village offers, for a brief while, an agreeable change of pace, an opportunity for a relaxation that is not always possible in the forest, and, one might say, better hunting, on occasion. An Mbuti band or an Mbuti family or an Mbuti individual may descend upon a village either because of sheer whim, or because of laziness if the forest hunting gets too strenuous, or because of dissension, or indeed for almost any reason except necessity. Whatever the reason, and most commonly it at least involves an expressed desire for relaxation and freedom from care, the reason is on the side of the Mbuti, the choice is theirs, and the dependence that follows is as voluntary as it is temporary.

ECONOMIC RECIPROCITY

We then have to ask what the Mbuti offer in return for the food and metal products that they receive, and to determine at least the economic structure of the relationship. In so doing we are inevitably led to consider the domestic, political and religious aspects and their interrelationship with the economic system, and it is in these interrelationships that inconsistency and conflict emerge.

Even in terms of sheer economic reciprocity the relationship is inherently unstable. Continuing to grant, for the moment, the fact that no economic necessity is involved on the part of the Mbuti, and that their dependence is voluntary and temporary, the forest world remain-

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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ing an ever-present, ever-accessible sanctuary of independence, then we are left with a situation which, if anything, is rather the reverse of what it is normally stated to be; for we find that the villagers have far more need of the Mbuti than the Mbuti have of the villagers.

Here we have to look briefly at the historical genesis of the relationship, which began with the invasion of the first non-Mbuti tribes three or four hundred years ago, and continued until the invasion reached its climax in the nineteenth century. The Mbuti found themselves caught between a number of warring tribes, and according to legend (also according to what one might reasonably expect) each isolated hunting band found it convenient to attach itself to one or another group of villagers. The villagers, on their part, needed the Mbuti as guides, scouts and spies, and, as related today by both sides, employed them as such, feeding them in return. When the situation became more stable, and notably when the last vestiges of open hostility were suppressed by the Belgian administration, this original relationship came to an end, neither side having any absolute need of the other. The Mbuti, however, had developed a strong taste for plantation foods and maintained their demands on the villagers. To this day, if a villager does not accede to such demands his plantation is simply raided and he has no recourse. Recognizing the difficulty of making an effective claim for theft, the villagers continued to supply food at request, but attempted to secure certain services in return.

We have already mentioned the attitude of the villagers toward the forest as a hostile place, and a place that they people with evil spirits. One of the services that they have tried to elicit from the Mbuti, then, is the supply of forest necessities such as saplings and leaves for housebuilding, bark for clothmaking (now almost obsolete among all the villagers), and meat and honey. The longer a village is in existence, the more scarce these supplies become in the immediate vicinity, and the villagers are mostly loath to venture far into the forest. However, plainly, as with the Mbuti, it is a question of convenience rather than necessity, though the Mbuti say that the villagers could never be successful as hunters, being far too clumsy and slow.

This is all largely a matter of historical conjecture, but it helps in providing a sense of direction, and in indicating that the onus for maintaining a reasonable degree of reciprocity is all the time upon the villagers, not upon the Mbuti. For today the villagers are still unwilling to go into the forest, and the Mbuti are still their major source of meat, honey and building materials. But there is, today, an addi-

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CHAPTER 4

The Notion of Hereditary Ownership

P C 121 648 C [186] A superficial glimpse of the Mbuti/Villager relationship in any village might well tend to confirm the belief that the Mbuti are dependent upon the villagers for the very principles of their social organization. This is the claim of the villagers, the more sophisticated of which use a popular description of the Mbuti as *"les gens sans culture."* The Mbuti themselves will readily admit it, and investigation will, up to a point, confirm it. But we have already witnessed one contradiction; namely, that if the situation is one of superordination, and one of total cultural dependence of the Mbuti upon the villagers, then the villagers would have and be able to exercise some form of political control, and they do not. Indeed there are only the most tenuous political mechanisms for relating the two groups, such as the supposition that each hunting band has a headman or chief (entitled *capita* or *sultani*) who is answerable to the village headman. The villagers accord the Mbuti headman due respect, not far different from the respect they would accord a junior headman of another village, and hold him responsible for the behavior of his band. But even supposing that the Mbuti headman had any actual authority over his band, we have seen that the villagers are incapable of enforcing their will by taking either retributive or restitutive action against the band or the *capita* for fear of reprisal, and because of their very real need for the continued, if minimal, service of the Mbuti and their fear of losing even that.

C 648 P 648 622

P 179 622 554 The Mbuti *capita*, in any case, is merely a village creation and carries no authority whatsoever and little influence among members of the hunting band. The other Mbuti accord him his title when in the village, or even when in the forest, if discussing a village problem. They use him as a convenient link who can also serve as a scapegoat. Through their "chief" the other Mbuti are freed of many of the cares and considerations involved in their relationship with the village, but

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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rate. I have known it to happen for Mbuti youngsters to go through the entire village marriage ceremony simply for the sake of the feasting, considering their relationship as no more than a mild flirtation. In either case the premature separation involves their respective *kpara* in restitution proceedings, which even if successful will still leave a net loss to the extent, at least, of a feast that may have involved a hundred or more Mbuti and villagers for up to three days.

This, together with the fact that a union that is considered as incestuous by the one group is not necessarily considered incestuous by the other, is sufficient to indicate the incompatibility of the two systems, which is only heightened if we attempt to correlate either kinship system, that of the villagers or that of the Mbuti, with the economic exchange system.

By extending the parallel still further, however, the villagers make their final attempt to gain some effective measure of control over the Mbuti and resolve the inherent conflicts through supernatural sanctions. And once again they are thwarted by a number of factors, one being that the Mbuti continue to adopt the outer form of the village customs with the utmost readiness, but do not adopt the system. Whereas, for the villagers, the total social structure is an integrated whole consisting of a number of institutions interrelated in a definite manner, for the Mbuti, in the village context, the same institutions are adopted but by no means interrelated in the same manner. The relationship between kinship and leadership, as we have seen, does not apply to the Mbuti. Their *capita* is elected rather than descended, and his whole meaning and purpose are correspondingly different. The *capita* has absolutely nothing to do, among the Mbuti, with the maintenance of law and order, and in no way symbolizes the common origin of the male members of the band.

So also, for the Mbuti, is the economic exchange system unrelated to either the kinship or the political systems in the village context. The exchange relationships may run directly counter to all those prescribed by the various political and kinship institutions the Mbuti have equally adopted.

Their apparent readiness to participate in village institutions, if not in the system, however, leaves the Mbuti open to yet another line of attack. Unable to enforce any of the control that would normally derive from the adoption of their socio-politico-economic institutions, the villagers open their magico-religious institutions to the Mbuti, and thus seek to place them under supernatural control—the

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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control of the specifically village supernatural. Indeed the villagers are obliged to do this, in consonance with the rest of their system, for to admit someone to the kinship system without admitting them to the ancestral cult would be a contradiction in terms. But not so for the Mbuti. The most sacred of the village institutions is completely divorced, in the Mbuti system, from any other adopted village institution. It is, like the other institutions, adopted for what it offers in itself, and if it is related to anything, it is related only to the economic aspect of the Mbuti/Villager relationship.

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CHAPTER 5

The Notion of Supernatural Control

THE VILLAGE SUPERNATURAL

We have already seen something of villager participation in Mbuti marriage arrangements, but only from the aspect of kinship. From this point of view the villagers hope to be able to control, to some extent, the movement and residence patterns of the Mbuti, and to support the myth of hereditary ownership. From another point of view, however, villager participation in the marriage of their Mbuti necessarily introduces the Mbuti to the village magico-religious system, through the ritual that consecrates the marriage as well as through the absorption of the Mbuti, in this way, into the village kinship structure. It might also be pointed out in passing that as far as the villagers are concerned, marriages between their Mbuti are of as much political importance as their own marriages, in regulating relationships between one village and another, one segment of the tribe and another. Insofar as our primary concern is with the Mbuti, however, this political aspect does not directly concern us here.

Marriage is only one village ritual adopted by the Mbuti, and in considering any such adoption we have to keep in mind the structural aspects of ritual in the village social system and, in particular, the relationship between ritual and kinship. It is in light of structure that the villager side of the Mbuti/Villager relationship is comprehensible, the attempt to include the Mbuti within the village framework being an attempt to secure some measure of control over them. That is not to say that the motive of control is necessarily responsible for the inclusion, but it is certainly openly acknowledged by villagers and has some bearing on their attitudes.

At the same time we must be aware that on the Mbuti side there is the knowledge that the villagers are seeking to gain control. There is a considered element of risk involved in accepting certain institu-

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tions, even in the strictest village context, but it is outweighed by what at first seems little more than a lively desire to have all the advantages of village life with none of the disadvantages. Again, it is only through an examination of the interrelationship of the institutions adopted by the Mbuti, and their relationship with the indigenous Mbuti social system, that we can arrive at any true understanding of the apparent process of acculturation.

The attempt by the villagers to assert supernatural control is structurally the most significant, for it involves elements with which the Mbuti have no institutionalized means of dealing. Political pressure the Mbuti can counter by changing allegiance; economic pressure can also be countered, by reverting to the always available pure hunting and gathering economy; as we shall see in the next section, pressure through absorption into the village kinship system is repelled quite simply by the maintenance of an opposed kinship system. However, the Mbuti have no magic with which to counter magic, no witchcraft or sorcery with which to counter witchcraft and sorcery. They do have belief with which to counter belief, but it is part of the belief of both Mbuti and villagers that in a war between the gods, no man can safely predict the outcome. It is in this situation that the villagers do manage to effect some extent of control, but it is also in this context that they come up against the ultimate bedrock of opposition.

Let us look at the various ways in which the magico-religious life of the villagers impinges upon that of the Mbuti, and the extent to which it exerts some measure of control over the hunters and gatherers. Fully recognizing that a clear division of the subject matter is difficult, if not impossible, to make, we nonetheless have to attempt such a division for the purposes of discussion. There is a great deal of overlapping, but nonetheless at the extremes, in this case, the division used here between magic and religion is legitimate.

By *magic* I refer to activities involving, on the part of the African, villager or Mbuti, a conviction in the pragmatic relationship between a cause and an effect which, in terms of Western science, is not demonstrable. The term in its usual sense has meaning only as far as we are concerned, for as far as the Africans here are concerned, magical activities are as scientifically valid as any other. They may not always be able to explain the exact way in which the effect is related to the cause, any more than everyone who drives a motorcar can explain the mechanism. Indeed, the corresponding term "medicine"

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is usually applied by the African to causal relationships he does not understand but which he still believes to be pragmatic. The mechanism exists, just as surely for the African as for the motorist. Whereas the term "magic" implies, for the Westerner, supernatural intervention, its African counterpart, for villagers and Mbuti alike, has virtually no such connotation. Some "magical" activities are not given any special term other than that for the activity itself. Those that are classified apart as a special type of activity are thought of as *curative*, and the classificatory term indicates effective function, not supernatural intervention. It is in this sense that we use the word, and in this sense alone that it should here be understood.

Witchcraft, on the other hand, introduces other elements, although it is still basically thought of as a scientifically explicable phenomenon, involving certain supernatural powers conveyed by the possession of witchcraft substance, something that can be touched and seen but, being located in the entrails (details as to exactly where, and what it looks like, vary), cannot be removed except at death. But whereas the existence of the powers is explained by the substance, the nature of the powers themselves is inexplicable, therefore supernatural.

Sorcery is akin to witchcraft only in that it involves the possession of similar powers. But whereas with witchcraft the powers depend upon the existence of witchcraft substance in the body of the witch and are controlled by that substance, the powers of the sorcerer come to him, or her, through the exertion of willpower, and are therefore controllable by the individual. A witch acts only as such when forced to do so by the substance. A sorcerer acts as such when he wishes to, for whatever purpose he chooses. There is, naturally, a complete terminological distinction between the two in the various local languages: in the lingua franca of the area, KiNgwana, the term *chawi* is used for witch, *lozi* is used for sorcerer. These terms do not necessarily correspond in their usage to the same terms in other Bantu languages, and there is a significant difference between village and Mbuti usages of each term. Needless to say, in that an individual possessing witchcraft substance is not directly answerable for his actions, however grave, he is not considered antisocial. But as a sorcerer directs his power for individual ends, he *is* considered antisocial, and is therefore culpable.

Religion, as used here, refers to the realm of belief where there is no attempt to explain supernatural powers in terms of empirical experi-

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ence and natural life. There is no practical cause—the cause itself is supernatural. I include various *rites de passage* under religion because such rites involve a thoroughgoing belief in the supernatural. The nature of the supernatural, however, varies greatly as seen by Mbuti and as seen by villagers. Both peoples, however, do have a belief in the supernatural; that is, scientifically nonexplicable powers that are invested in another class of beings, without form or substance, which we call *spiritual*. It is belief in these spiritual beings that is the essence of what we here call religion.

CURATIVE MAGIC

As indicated above, we are not here in the least concerned with acts, of either the Mbuti or the villagers, simply because they involve an assumed but scientifically false connection between cause and effect. We use the term "magic" as a translation of the native term, which groups together divers curative activities in the belief that all are equally scientific. Thus the penicillin that cures a sore is magic just as much as the antelope horn that cures a spell of bad hunting.

In trying to assess how far the village world impinges on the forest world in this respect, then, we have to see what situations there are for which the Mbuti have no cure and which they wish to cure, and for which the villagers do have a cure. Or, indeed, we must look to see if the reverse situation exists.

When I say there is little magic in the forest world of the Mbuti, I mean that there are few curative activities, and for the very simple reason that there are relatively few situations that require curing. For most Mbuti who have reached adolescence the life expectancy is good, as is the expectancy of good health. For most minor physiological disorders the Mbuti seem to have effective remedies, some of which are cited in Appendix II together with details of the botanical identification of the plants, wherever I was able to be sure, or reasonably sure, that these were the only plants used. Such remedies cover not only the mild fevers, aches and pains, and sicknesses that may come the way of the Mbuti, but they also cover accidental injury such as may be incurred by falling on a spear, by being attacked by a wild animal, bitten by a snake, stung by bees, or by falling from a tree, breaking or twisting an arm or leg. Such injuries, however, occur remarkably seldom.

For these particular curative activities the Mbuti are acknowledged

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much faith in a charm against a witch's power, if such power exists; their own remedy is retreat to the forest, where there are no witches. They do not believe in the existence of malevolent *keti*, or spirits, as do the villagers.

In the realm of curative magic, then, the villager has nothing to offer that the Mbuti needs, and has no means of utilizing magic or exclusive village knowledge of magical techniques to control the Mbuti.

WITCHCRAFT

If it were not for their own misconception of village witchcraft, the Mbuti would be at no disadvantage through their own lack of it. As it is, however, they tend to confuse witchcraft and sorcery, and consequently find themselves dealing with a phenomenon totally outside their forest-world experience—conscious malevolence.

Their confusion is visible in their constant usage of the terms associated with sorcery, even when only witchcraft is implied. The forest hunters are aware of the theoretical difference, but simply do not believe in the existence of witchcraft substance. They are unwilling enough to believe in malevolent supernatural powers, but events combine to persuade them to belief.

Unlike magic, which applies to natural phenomena, witchcraft and sorcery deal necessarily with the supernatural, and create their own need for protection. But whereas the villagers, in their acceptance of the theory of witchcraft substance, can happily accept a fetish bundle as adequate protection, the Mbuti, seeing the whole thing as malevolent sorcery, cannot believe that a bundle of sticks and bones is going to afford much help. Looking at witchcraft—and sorcery—as something belonging essentially to the village world, however, they do have recourse in flight to the forest, where, in their experience, these supernatural powers cannot easily reach. In the village world they can find no protection, and can only hope for an end to the underlying hostility.

Thus witchcraft, which among the villagers is essentially a mechanism for social control, being a concept employed usefully to bring to light hidden sources of dispute and to publicly shame troublemakers, inadvertently gives the villagers a weapon against the Mbuti, while at the same time it drives the Mbuti both literally back into

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On another occasion the *kpara* himself did exactly the same thing. In the first instance the *kpara* was Ndaka, in the second, Bira. The villagers evidently believe that whatever *molimo* ritual the Mbuti have, it was learned from the village, if badly learned and performed with illegitimate variations. As with the *elima*, perhaps also for fear of exposure to the malevolent forest spirits, the villagers do not seek to interfere too much with Mbuti *molimo* celebrations. We shall see that these celebrations are quite divorced from the village *molimo*, regardless of whether or not the origin of the two was common. Also, we shall see that the Mbuti *molimo* has none of the connections that evidently exist between the village *molimo* and the *nkumbi*.

As with the *elima*, the villagers limit the extent of their interest to ensuring the removal, by village-supplied procedure, of the last taints of uncleanliness. This they do, again in conjunction with a feast, turning a blind eye to the fact that as many as a dozen different Mbuti "clans" may be represented at what is supposed to be a closed clan feast.

The extent to which the villagers believe they assert supernatural control over the Mbuti does not coincide at all with the extent to which they effectively do exert such control, for the reason that must now be sufficiently obvious; no matter how many or what manner of village institutions the Mbuti adopt, they are adopted into a preexisting system and no longer have the same interrelationships they do in the village system. The two systems are kept irreconcilably apart by what has in effect been emerging throughout—the existence of two completely different sets of values.

Yet the villagers are not entirely victims of their own *mbafu*, as the Mbuti would have it. There is little else they could do, and the adoption of the Mbuti into one aspect of village social structure would indeed be *bulé* without their adoption into the total structure. The villagers are consistent and logical, and above all it must be remembered that in their own eyes they have achieved what they set out to achieve—control. They believe that ultimate control is theirs because of the force of the supernatural powers on their side, and in point of fact, although it does not work quite the way they think, the concept of supernatural power does give them a small measure of control to the extent that it creates fear.

But what is also achieved is the creation of a myth that completely regularizes the whole situation, as far as the villagers are concerned, affording them an institutionalized means of dealing with every possi-

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ble situation, retaining at all times the village position of superiority over the Mbuti. But it is a myth which at the same time satisfies the needs of the Mbuti, affording them precisely the freedom of which the villagers seek to deprive them, enabling them to rationalize the situation in their own favor and to their own advantage. We shall shortly see how this takes place.

It is also possible to see Mbuti scrounging food from villagers other than their own *kpara* and, when not successful, simply stealing what they want. If they are caught they are scolded by their *kpara* and that is generally all. If more fuss is made than that, all the Mbuti are likely to pack up and return to the forest within hours. But whatever Mbuti may be seen engaged in whatever activity, they can be seen only as individuals in relationship to a particular villager at that particular moment, unrelated to other villagers and other Mbuti, unless they are included in the same activity. Only in the village camp of the Mbuti, usually at the edge of the plantation, do they form a society, but the interpersonal relationships observable even in a village camp bear little resemblance to relationships in the more strictly village context.

The situation becomes more understandable in light of the expressed Mbuti attitude to their own place in the village world. They refer to the village as being a place for good hunting and good eating. Hunting requires cunning, and particularly when dealing with a "tricky" animal such as the villager, say the Mbuti. The word for "trickery" means more than "clever," it has connotations of supernatural power. So the Mbuti, when hunting in the village, use appropriate tactics, just as they do in the forest. Carrying wood and fetching water, building houses and pounding manioc, are all part of those tactics, and may perhaps be likened to the net with which the Mbuti trap the forest animals.

This Mbuti attitude to the relationship not only fits with the theory that there is, in effect, no necessary economic interdependence, but it also fits well with the suggestion of *apparent* structural incompatibility. Mbuti talk of "eating" the villagers, and indeed the villagers also talk, with some asperity, of being eaten. In Mbuti thought, however, it is rather more literal than it may seem, for the villagers are not only referred to as animals, a common term of abuse, but they are considered as animals. And when one eats an animal one merely consumes its substance, one does not thereby assume its form or its pattern of behavior.

Even supposing that there was a necessary economic interdependence, the daily life of the village in no way reveals any sense of economic urgency. Even in times of crisis, such as the cotton harvest, powerful chiefs like Kachui may evidently find themselves deserted by the Mbuti and forced to make out on their own. But if there were a true economic dependence, then there would have to be a workable economic system, with an associated system of social control; and

we have already seen that in place of system and control there is, apparently, only flux and instability that militate *against* system and control.

By flux I refer to the fact that the Mbuti appear to adopt village institutions but not the village system of interrelationships. In this way there is a disconnectedness in the village context of the Mbuti that enables both sides to refer to whichever institution is convenient at the moment to establish a relationship of the moment. Thus an Mbuti may be asked to help one villager on the ground of their *karé* relationship, and expected by another to help because of the hereditary *kpara* relationship. Considerations of simple economic exchange between the same Mbuti and still other villagers may override either of the above considerations at another moment. Thus the Mbuti has a number of possible ways in which he can link himself with the village and the villagers, at different and distinct times. The converse also applies, and if a villager finds his hereditary claims ineffective he may call on other Mbuti because of the *karé* relationship, and so forth.

In view of the nomadic nature of the hunting band and, as we shall see, of its composition, this "system" of flux is the only one that could possibly pertain. But it leads inevitably to instability because of the consequent lack of any one system of control. In the same way that the Mbuti can hop from one conflicting set of relationships to another, so he can hop from one system of control to another. By Mbuti rejection of the total village system and by what proves to be an opposition of a totally different set of values, the villager ultimately is denied virtually all control, and the Mbuti similarly is denied any absolute security in his relationships with the villagers.

However, the loss of control is more serious to the villagers than is the loss of security to the Mbuti, and it is also more complete, for the villagers are themselves bound by the supernatural sanctions through which they vainly attempt to impose control upon the Mbuti. The whole situation is incompatible with the notion of economic interdependence, yet there is no denying the actual relationship between the two groups of people. Nor can one deny that within a framework of flux and instability, the relationship is persistent, so there must be some system. If that system is so evidently unrelated to economic factors, we have to look elsewhere for its focal point.

There are not all that many basic relationships that can exist be-

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4 •
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

There are not all that many basic relationships that can exist between two peoples in a context such as this. Apart from one of symbiosis, implying interdependence, there could be political subjugation, such as existed, say, between the Tussi and the Hutu. But that is plainly not the case here. The villagers themselves admit their inability to exert physical force to bend the Mbuti to their will, for the Mbuti always have the ultimate escape of flight to the sanctuary of the forest. The villagers are completely unequipped to pursue the Mbuti into the forest, and never attempt it. They are incapable of even finding the Mbuti if the hunters wish not to be found. And, as we have seen, there is no effective political mechanism for maintaining any kind of political relationship, let alone one of superordination/subordination.

Another possible relationship would be one of assimilation, such as occurred among the Ganda of East Africa, where two different peoples merged, as did their two different economies. At the present there is no question of actual assimilation, but the existence of linguistic and institutional similarities certainly indicates an interchange of ideas, at least. But it is, at the moment, an interchange of outward forms only, and not of the accompanying systems and structure. And while a great deal of intimacy is expressed, in action as in word, between the two groups, there is also a great deal of expressed opposition, and sometimes hostility.

The intermarriage between Mbuti girls and village men and the attempted absorption of the Mbuti into the village kinship system may be considered as steps toward assimilation, but if so they are very tentative and preliminary steps, and as such need not concern us here. Indeed we shall find that there are other indications of the reverse process, of separation. There is no question of physical separation in the sense of the expulsion of one group by the other, but a perfectly valid alternative relationship left to us for consideration is one of ideological separation accompanied by a mutually accepted territorial separation—a form of indigenous apartheid.

This in fact seems to be the case, for in common conversation, as in action, both groups distinguish the village and the village people from the forest and the forest people. The Mbuti effectively are the only group to cross the territorial boundaries, and the ideological boundaries remain inviolate on both sides. When the Mbuti cross into the village world they leave the forest behind them, and with it they leave their forest social system. Forest values cannot be so easily left

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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a few yards away, and some village camps, depending upon the circumstances, are actually built still in the shade of the forest, out of sight of the village and its plantations.

But granted this separation of the two worlds, and the fact that when the band (or part of it) comes to the village it disintegrates as such, and if we accept the lack of any economic necessity or political force by which we could explain the relationship, we still have to answer the question as to why a relationship exists and what its true nature is.

This can best be answered after we have seen the nature of the forest world, but it can already be seen that the meeting of the two peoples is somewhat like the meeting of two polar opposites that are irresistibly drawn together. And indeed, such magnetic links between opposites are the only true ones we have found. The point at which the forest and the village truly meet, the focal point of the relationship between the two peoples, is not economic or political, but religious. The nature of the meeting is one of opposition, and this opposition is most clearly expressed in the mutually antagonistic systems of values. Although we have only concerned ourselves with the village world to this point, we have already seen the strength of the village fear of the forest, resulting in their unwillingness to enter it and their consequent "dependence" upon the Mbuti for necessary forest products. This fear is expressed in religious terms by reference to the hostile forest spirits, and the general antagonism of the forest to the village world, witnessed by its reluctance to support village crops. Insofar as the villagers recognize the Mbuti as a forest people they believe them to be somehow aligned with the forest spirits, and therefore to be placated. That does not prevent the villagers from attempting, while placating, to extend some form of control over the Mbuti. Indeed they seem far more concerned about this than they are about the small amount of meat or labor they manage to extract from the Mbuti (see Table 3 for an example of "economic" exchange).

The Mbuti most nearly fall under village control through their own fear of the village (which by its very nature is not only not "of the forest" but is actively hostile to the forest), and through their fear of the powers the villagers claim to have over the supernatural, by witchcraft and sorcery. Quite apart from the historic genesis of the Mbuti/Villager relationship, the very antagonism of their ways of life, together with their territorial propinquity, would be enough to de-

2: Tumbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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mand that they come to some kind of terms and establish some kind of mechanism for dealing with the threat that each feels.

We have seen how the villagers attempt to deal with the situation by asserting control over the Mbuti through the adoption of the Mbuti into the village social system, thus placing them under the supernatural sanctions of village society. We have also seen that the Mbuti evade such control, though we have not exactly seen how, for at the moment the success of their evasion seems to lie in the rejection of system, in a flux and instability that alone would lead to chaos. In examining the forest society of the Mbuti now, however, we shall see how this flux and apparent instability is in fact a structural factor, and that while the villagers are constantly attempting to absorb the Mbuti into their village social system, the Mbuti have evolved a social system of their own which, while still permitting their traditional hunting and gathering existence, takes this new village factor into consideration and, so to speak, by opposing, ends it. For the Mbuti forest system seems almost expressly designed to run counter to the village system, and, by opposing it at every point of possible structural contact, it makes any structural relationship except one of opposition quite impossible.

Thus in examining the forest system of the Mbuti we have to remember that the same institution may well have a double function; the one of maintaining cohesion with the forest world, the other of maintaining opposition with the world outside. And insofar as the invasion of the village tribes is relatively recent, this is a system that is still evolving. All the more so because the successive waves of the invasion, followed by the advent of the Arab slave traders and finally by the arrival of the Belgians, have all wrought sudden and drastic changes in the nature of village life and on the village settlement pattern. There may indeed be some institutions that are newly evolved and the purpose of which is directed primarily at maintaining the relationship of opposition between forest and village. Others are in the process of adaptation, notably the Mbuti *molimo*, where the forest system of values has its deepest roots and where, consequently, their opposition to village values must be most forcefully expressed. And some institutions appear to be in a state of atrophy.

We are, then, very clearly going to be studying a society in the process of change. The structure that will emerge, involving a disconcerting lack of emphasis on kinship, is not necessarily or even probably characteristic of hunting and gathering societies, and should cer-

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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tainly not be taken as such. It should only be considered as a system that maintains, in its basic respects, a hunting and gathering tradition, while also maintaining, as completely as possible, a physiological and ideological separation from a hostile village system.

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CHAPTER 8

The Band

TERRITORY

Before we can begin to understand what the Mbuti band is, we have to understand the notion of territory, which is effectively the only concept through which the band can be defined. Insofar as the band is the largest effective political unit, so the widest territorial boundaries that are recognized are those separating each band from the others. As will be seen, there is a current tendency for all Mbuti bands to recognize a loose unity to bind them in common opposition to the villagers, and in this context they will define a correspondingly wider territory, the forest, in which the villagers are regarded as trespassers. At the other end of the scale, the nuclear family has no territorial claims except those held jointly with other families of the same band. An individual may stake his claim to a tree that he knows or believes will yield honey, or to one that promises to provide good bark for making into cloth. A common way of showing that the tree is claimed is by tying a vine around the trunk at shoulder height.

A claim thus made by no means gives the individual or his family exclusive ownership of the tree or exclusive rights to its produce, however. It merely conveys the right for that individual to have the first opportunity for collecting the honey or for cutting the bark. When the honey is collected or the bark cut, it is done collectively and the claimant is subject to all the usual rules governing the sharing of forest produce. He will have precedence of choice and his share will be larger. If he is not on hand when the honey is ready, however, and if he does not signify his intention to come to claim it, his right is forfeited. It may be seen that the advantage accruing from this slight departure from the norm of joint band ownership of the territory and its produce is in no way great enough to detract from the central value of communal territory, but at the same time it is sufficiently

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agreement persists, however, then when the honey season ends and the band is forced to resume net-hunting, and therefore has to rejoin its forces in the common interest of an effective net-hunt, one or another of the dissident segments will join up with another band in another territory. It is said that it would not stay within the same territory and hunt there, even if it were numerically strong enough.

Thus we can say that the composition of each camp is ad hoc, responding to the needs of the moment rather than to any preconceived plan, or to any notion derived from tradition. The lines of division are never the same; the reasons for division are nearly always personal. The system does not lie here, then, but rather in the economy, which favors a unified camp for the major part of the year and a divided camp for a brief two months or so. The complete break and freedom of separate association allowed by the honey season (which is also a particularly bountiful season as far as vegetable foods are concerned) is, in fact, what makes practical this otherwise apparently unsystematic flux. That the flux has a function we shall shortly see.

For the archers much the same process pertains. The economics work in reverse, however, for the *begbe* season is made an occasion for the entire band to gather together. Normally, throughout the year, the band is divided into three or four small sub-bands, all within their common territory. Tracking and ambushing and using the bow and arrow do not call for co-operation among more than two or three or four men. A large camp of, say, twenty-four men would then have at least six hunting parties setting off each day, and this would necessarily mean frequent changes of camp. A small camp, however, sending out two parties in opposite directions, can remain in the same area for a long time without scaring the game away. There are few occasions for members of different sub-bands to get together during this time, except for casual visits. Once a year the whole band unites, however, for the communal beat-hunt known as *begbe*. The mechanism for convening the whole band and the exact time of year this takes place, if there is a special time of year, are not clear either in the literature or from my own records. Each archer band I visited, however, assured me that it was near the honey season, and I suspect before the honey season.

However, the essential remains the same. Among the archers, as among the net-hunters, there is a process of fission followed by fusion —or perhaps, in the case of the archers, it would be better to say there is a process of fusion followed by fission. We now have to try and

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621 121 discover, at least for the net-hunters of Epulu, what is the structure of this process.

621 613 [611] We have seen that the band is plainly a nonlineal entity; it cannot even truly be called bilateral, as descent is not counted on either side for practical purposes.[6] Lineages are known, and these are always patrilineages, but they seem to have little economic, political or even religious significance. The only time the lineage is mentioned with any frequency is when discussing the merits or otherwise of a proposed marriage, and then it is not the lineage name that is usually mentioned, but rather the names and relationships of the individuals concerned, their parents and grandparents. It can be seen from the plans, in any case, that the process of fission and fusion under discussion is not one that supports the integrity of unilineal descent groups, but rather one that cuts across such groups.

621 613 184 [224] [174] Nor can the nonlineal nature of the band or the flux of band composition be attributed solely to the ecology. The situation is comparable between the archers and the net-hunters, and yet each of these groups practices a different hunting technique, and the process of fission and fusion takes an opposite direction. Either the archers or the net-hunters could, in fact, operate perfectly efficiently without all the internal movement that we have seen, and they may very well once have operated as patrilineal bands. While in no way supporting those who suggest that band composition is due to local ecology, it is undeniable that there is an interest in lineage, evident in the attempt to balance lineages and prevent lineage dominance. Further, the camp plans indicate a general tendency toward lineage solidarity, particularly in times of crisis. For instance, with reference to Plans 9 and 10, the normally unsystematic camp plan that pertained (9) was abruptly altered and became divided along strict lineage lines when one of the sub-band members, Cephu himself, committed the unforgivable crime of placing his net in front of others during the hunt. The only significant relationship of the flux to forest life is that it enables the band to respond to changes in environmental conditions by altering its size. It must also be admitted that it is

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[6] Some misunderstanding may arise owing to different usages of descent-system terminology. Some schools of thought consider "bilateral" as synonymous with "cognatic," and hold that the terms include all affines and do not imply any differences in the method of tracing descent. To such an extent, perhaps the Mbuti band may be termed bilateral or cognatic, but to me, and I believe to others, both terms imply one kind of descent *system* or another, placing an emphasis on lineage that is not characteristic of the Mbuti band and therefore to be eschewed.

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The very fact alone that each band has clearly defined boundaries and that each hunting territory borders on two or three others may be taken as an indication of the self-sufficiency of the over-all region and of each territory. Were such fixed and adjacent boundaries to exist with the accepted and generally practiced custom of non-trespass, then where each territory was not self-sufficient trespass or warfare would be bound to occur, and there would have to be some institutionalized manner of dealing with the situation. Mbuti society has no institutional means of dealing with any such situation, nor is there any indication that it ever has had either the institutions or the need for them. The social organization, such as it is, indicates that each band within its territory is to the largest possible extent independent of its neighbors in terms of politics and economics. It might indeed be argued that territorial self-sufficiency, and consequent territorial demarcation, were achieved only with the advent of the village tribes and their plantations. There is, however, not the slightest evidence for this, and the evident abundance of the forest is a strong counterargument.

At all times of year there is in the forest an abundant supply of mushrooms, roots, berries, nuts and herbs, some fruits and some leafy vegetables. The very fact that the Mbuti exchange meat for plantation foods and villager utensils indicates that there is at least ample meat for Mbuti needs, with a surplus for trade. And again it is worth noting the fact that the Mbuti themselves equate hunger with noise and laziness, both perfectly rational explanations of poor hunting and gathering.[1] On those rare occasions when the hunting, even far off in the forest, really is poor, it is considered exceptional enough to call out the *molimo* society, normally reserved for death.

As far as items of material culture are concerned, we have probably indicated sufficiently (p. 33 *seq.*) the extent of Mbuti dependence upon the village, and the degree of its necessity. It is more significant and telling to look at the structural aspects of the economic relationship. Here we immediately see that the structure is very heavily one-sided. From the village point of view it is perfectly clear-cut, depending on the two alleged institutions of *karé* blood brotherhood and hereditary ownership, although, owing to the constant flux in

[1] The equation of hunger and death is a common one to the Mbuti, who say "Hunger kills me" instead of "I am hungry." But the symbolism goes deeper, and a surfeit of food is considered the sine qua non of a *molimo* death festival—the primary focus of which is not on death but on the continuity of life.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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volve any reciprocal rights or obligations, the increased efficiency of each band being the reward of each.

ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BAND AND VILLAGE

This has already been dealt with to some extent, and has been seen to involve a question of mutual convenience rather than of economic necessity. What needs to be emphasized, perhaps, is that there can in effect be an effective economic relationship only between a territorial band and a territorial village, without regard to the composition of either. The territorial village is likely to be far more consistent in composition, moving less frequently, less far and less at random than the band, and above all following a clearly patrilineal/patrilocal system of descent and marriage. Any village, then, may be said to be in an economic relationship with any hunting band whose territory includes that village. In addition, it may have a relationship with other bands whose territories are sufficiently close to allow easy exchange.

The band is similarly in relationship with a village or villages according to territorial considerations. Within that band each individual will also have personal-exchange relationships with his villager *karé* brother, with his *kpara*, and with any other individual villager in the local village if neither his *karé* nor his *kpara* are there. He may maintain any, all or none of these individual relationships as it pleases him; there is no institutional means of compelling him one way or the other from either the band or the village. He decides entirely in terms of his own needs, those of his family and the general needs of the band. If he finds himself in conflict with the band then he either forms a subsection with two or three others or he goes to visit another band. Generally, however, a band tolerates complete individualism in this respect. The obligation to share, however, does not apply to village foods. Any Mbuti who does not enter into an exchange relationship with a villager, or who does not steal what he wants, goes without unless his relatives or friends voluntarily offer him of their own.

The decision of the individual Mbuti often shows rather more forethought than is shown or called for in his other economic activities. The probable length of absence of or from his *karé* or *kpara* is taken into consideration. If an Mbuti has a particularly generous exchange partner, he will, in that partner's absence, maintain at least nominal

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exists among the Mbuti, and mutual obligations that exist in the forest are no longer practicable and so are no longer considered as binding. Generally there is a fractioning into individual family or even smaller elements, each individual or family having a villager exchange partner. However, some villagers with larger and more productive plantations, or with other assets (such as the blacksmith), may attract a number of Mbuti who thus form a temporary co-operative group while in the village. Any such bonds formed are purely of the moment and in that context, and are shed immediately on return to the forest. For the moment, however, they are real and binding, falling under village sanctions and even to some extent subject to village jurisdiction. To this latter, however, the Mbuti only submit so far as it is convenient. In a case of inter-Mbuti dispute in the village context, the litigants are likely, for personal and individual reasons, to accept villager arbitration. In the case of a dispute between an Mbuti and a villager, however, it will be the convenience of the band that is considered as well as that of the individual.

ECONOMIC AUTHORITY

Such organization as exists for economic purposes arises in direct response to the immediate demands of the present context. It is constant only as long as the context is constant, and any continuity derives from contextual continuity, not from any hardening of traditional arteries or inherited patterns of leadership or behavior. The only structural aspects of the economy that persist in other realms are those related to the principles of territory and age.

Ecological and technological considerations determine the general pattern of subsistence activities, hunting and gathering; this pattern is modified according to the desire of the Mbuti for village luxuries or to the pressure put upon them by their villager neighbors. As any of these considerations changes, so does the pattern. There is no attempt to control or dominate either the geographical or human environment.

Insofar as organization is in the nature of a response, then, leadership is minimal, in the economic realm. All major decisions are taken by common consent, as in other realms of Mbuti life. Men and women have equal say, hunting and gathering being equally important to the economy. Young married couples and youths have the most to say, being the most active hunters and gatherers, but while ability as a hunter carries some weight, too much ability may lead to

2: Tumbuli E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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ridicule. That is, a man who displays himself as a great hunter, and boasts of his achievements too loudly, is somewhat distrusted, and any attempt on his part to use his reputation to gain more say than others will lead immediately to ridicule.

One other consideration determines the extent of influence of a man or woman in economic matters, and that is their knowledge of the territory. Thus, no matter how deserving of respect as hunters, a visiting Mbuti family who do not know the territory well will have little to say regardless of their kinship, age or other considerations. They will nonetheless be expected to take part in discussions.

It is not possible to talk of organization of economic relations with other bands, for such relationships are so rare and diverse. And insofar as the exchange relationship between the Mbuti and the villagers is an individual one, there is little call for organization or leadership there either. When there is call for a joint decision concerning the village, even if it does not directly concern hunting and gathering but, say, the desire of the villagers for entertainment for a wedding feast, or for harvest labor in the plantations, it is still treated by the Mbuti as a hunting issue and it is the same people, the younger married couples, who have the most say. It is made clear in Mbuti discussions concerning a projected move to a village camp that, for them, the village is regarded as another hunting ground. A move villageward of the whole band is to be considered in terms of the amount of energy and the nature of the effort to be expended, and of the consequent, prospective rewards.

The same pattern of organization and leadership pertains only in the making of the decision, however. From the moment of arrival in the village, the band ceases to operate as such and will only assemble for general discussion, in the forest manner, when contemplating a return to the forest, or if it is deemed profitable to organize a hunt for the specific intent of securing meat for the villagers.

It is only in the village, then, that the nuclear family can really be considered as a separate economic identity (this is particularly true of the net-hunters, rather less so for the archers). In the realm of forest subsistence the individual and the family are subordinated to the band or, perhaps better, become immersed in the band, for they almost lose their identity. Family membership is of no consequence in determining economic responsibility; age and territoriality are the more important factors. Any tendency toward charismatic leadership is countered by ridicule, and any persistence on the part of the hunter may lead to his being given the job of representing the

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CHAPTER 11

Government: Internal

INTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

Before attempting to understand the over-all system of government in Mbuti society, it is necessary to distinguish between different fields of authority, for each field of activity has its own leaders, drawn from a particular segment of the community. It is in this way that authority is dispersed throughout the band; every adult is accorded special respect in one field or another, but none can claim respect in all fields. Individual authority is unthinkable, and not only are there no chiefs or headmen in Mbuti society; there are not even any councils of elders or any ritual specialists such as prophets or diviners. Such adults as have respect in any particular field at any particular moment do not even have any authority; they can merely claim to be heard. Their decision is likely to be given general assent and, as in economic matters, that decision is then said to be "good," and "pleasing" to the forest. The forest personified as a benevolent divinity remains as the only recognized authority, one which sometimes expresses its feelings with unmistakable clarity; an excessive storm, falling trees, poor hunting and ill health may all be taken as signs of displeasure, while good weather and good health and good hunting are indications that all is well. But often the forest remains silent. Then the Mbuti have to sound its feelings out through discussion. Dreams may be taken into account, but there is no question of waiting for visible signs of the forest's pleasure. The delegation of authority is clear; the decision of the whole band, the very fact of unanimity, is sufficient sign of the favor of the forest. There is always diversity of opinion, freely expressed, but prolonged disagreement is considered as "noise," and offensive to the forest. Unanimity, therefore, is a powerful and positive value, equated with the opposite to noise—quiet, or *ekimi*.

554 The various fields in which we can speak of authority fall into three
• 121 main categories—economic, ritual, and legal. In the first two, by authority is meant prominence of activity and participation in discussion in what is, generally, a normal situation. In the last category, legal, the situation is abnormal, one of dispute, and by authority is meant prominence in the settling of that dispute. Nowhere does it have any validity unless backed by common assent. Yet it is more than mere influence, for in each field certain classes of individuals are recognized as having the right and ability to interpret the pleasure of the forest.

554 Table 8[1] indicates the distribution of this "authority" throughout
561 the band. It will be seen that it is evenly divided between the sexes
[562] and among all adult age levels; only the children are not accorded any authority except among themselves. Further, authority is located at one age level or another or with the nuclear family, with few exceptions. For the life crises (excluding birth), authority is divided between the youths and the elders. Youths and elders also share responsibility for the camp while the hunt is away, even if some of the hunters remain behind.

554 There are many examples of Mbuti who have appeared in the role
[648] of leader vis-à-vis the village, but as their authority was nil in relation to forest life, they need not concern us here. Their only function in the forest, other than their normal role as hunters, was to communicate the wishes of the one group of people to the other.

554 The only individual who might be recognized as occupying a special
156 political position in the life of the hunting band, on any ground other
522 than age, is the camp clown. He is usually a hunter, and his position
626 is unofficial, depending on his abilities as an actor and a clown. He
627 is not appointed, and there is no special name for him or his position. However, every band seems to have its clown. His function is to act as a buff between disputants, deflecting the more serious disputes away from their original sources, absolving other individuals of blame by accepting it himself. Frequently he will end a dispute simply through the use of ridicule, and although such ridicule may be taken as a form of judgment, the essential point is that once again its objective is to divert attention from the source of the dispute and also to divert blame from anyone who is clearly in the wrong. The major concern of all, except possibly the prime disputants, is that the dispute shall be ended, and frequently by creating or reviving another, lesser dispute the clown brings the disputants into the same frame of mind.

[1] [see page 330-- Analysis]

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

attempt is made to settle the issue in question one way or the other, even verbally, and the equally small number in which direct action is taken. The percentages are given as follows:

DISPUTE	*Number Recorded*	*Number of Decisions or Judgments made*	*Instances of Positive Action*
Food	67	5 (7.5%)	4 (5.9%)
Sex	37	4 (10.8%)	5 (13.5%)
Village	11	1 (9.1%)	1 (9.1%)
Theft	5	3 (60%)	
Territory	4		3 (75%)

These figures indicate the greatest degree of decision, either by the passing of opinions (judgments) or by the taking of action, in the least frequent types of dispute.

In the most common disputes of all, those arising out of trivia and having no particular direction and no specific purpose, it is only about one in a hundred that comes to a head in a way that calls for action or decision, such as the case of the two brothers (34). Such disputes gave frequent opportunity for the voicing of opinions on almost any matter, and acted as a mechanism by which most incipient disputes of a more serious nature were detected and aired before they grew to major proportions.

An examination of all the recorded disputes shows that without a doubt there are forces working toward order in Mbuti society, despite its unformalized nature and the absence of political or legal "systems." Such forces include the compelling demands of the stomach, which suffers directly from any dispute that interrupts the hunting and gathering economy, as any major dispute will; the weight of public opinion, expressed verbally, or through ridicule or mime, or in action such as thrashing (rare, and only for youths) or ostracism and exile. These are the negative forces against antisocial behavior. There are equally positive forces toward social behavior, including the esteem of one's age mates and elders, the affection of children, the contentment of a full stomach and, perhaps above all, the belief in the personal benevolence of the forest.[10] The positive aspect of the

[10] Fortune (1935) describes a parallel situation among the Manus, who, like the Mbuti, respect morality beyond the pressures of social sanctions. Fortune claims that the religious sanctions provide a socially established way of keeping the social sentiment "quick," and of bringing offenders to book without seeming to be personal. The latter aspect of religious sanctions is probably more vital for the Mbuti, where any dispute is

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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forest as an incentive toward good behavior is far more important and far more strong than its negative aspect as a deterrent against bad behavior.

likely to be highly disruptive but where disputes nonetheless occur. Any personal intervention or judgment would only be likely to lead to further disputes. The impersonal nature of the forest as arbitrator and judge maintains the impersonality of the laws; or if the forest is considered as endowed with personality, it is a spiritual personality and owes no more allegiance to one Mbuti than to another, and so is still impersonal in this context.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

self being maneuvered into an awkward situation may suddenly leave altogether and go somewhere else. Neither lineal seniority nor political authority (chieftainship) are ever even mentioned in any attempt to influence a family's movement. When Manyalibo and Masisi, who shared the same grandfather (Manyalibo being the lineal elder), fell out and moved into separate camps, it was Masisi who took the initiative, and although Manyalibo claimed that Masisi ought to respect him because of age, he never suggested that Masisi was subject to his authority. He even stated openly that Masisi had the right to move wherever he wanted, but that it was not good for "brothers" to separate.

Thus interfamily exchange can only be regarded as a direct relationship between two families which, if they happen to be in separate bands, creates a relationship between their respective bands allowing for further such interchanges. Such bands respond to each other's needs with regard to optimum economic size, occasionally cooperate, and possess an additional mechanism for the settlement of interband disputes concerning trespass or marriage exchange.

BAND TO VILLAGE

In examining relationships between the band and the village we find the same distinction, only more clearly made, between formal and informal relationships that are the most effective.

But whereas even latent antagonism between bands is minimal, there is considerable latent antagonism between band and village, manifest not only in opposed systems of economic exploitation but also in opposed systems of values. Open conflict would bring advantage to neither group, and we have to think, in view of the lack of necessary economic interdependence, of the exchange in connection with this antagonism. It does indeed offer each group ample opportunity for insulting the other, though individual exchange relationships sometimes remain amicable, and even intimate, for considerable lengths of time.

The outward objective, at least, of the general Mbuti/Villager relationship is one of economic exchange, for mutual convenience. There are a number of formal levels at which such exchange, and the necessary associated negotiations, may be conducted, using a corresponding number of media:

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

1. Band/Village: *capita*/Chief
2. Lineage/Lineage: Lineage elder/*Kpara*
3. Individual/Individual: *Karé*/*Karé*

We shall deal with each in turn to determine the formal nature of the relationship, and the degree to which it is effective.

Capita/*Chief*

The relationship of the band as a whole to the village as a whole would be a simple and effective one if the band were, as the villagers claim it should be, a unilineal entity based on the principle of patrilineal descent. However, as we have seen, the band is generally composite, and in any case its composition is constantly changing. Sheer territorial propinquity, however, encourages a relationship of economic exchange between these two units, regardless of the composition of either. Generally speaking there is no need for the village to relate to the band as a whole, food exchange being more easily effected at an interfamilial or interpersonal level. However, under the foreign economic pressures mentioned earlier, at certain times villages found it necessary to have the massed help of all the Mbuti they could muster. In such a case the village Chief summoned the Mbuti *capita* and made his wishes known. The *capita* relayed these wishes to the band, which then did whatever it thought expedient, after general discussion.

The *capita* seems to assume more importance as an institution in the villages of the archer area, to the east of the Epulu. However, even there the villagers themselves admit that the institution is foreign to the Mbuti. I have not once heard it claimed otherwise, by Mbuti or villagers. Among the archers, as among the net-hunters, old men and women are accorded respect, but they have no authority and their area of influence is limited in accordance with their age, and does not include the village. Such elders, then, have no more say than any other Mbuti concerning village matters pertaining to the band as a whole. But village affairs do not fall within the province of any age group, and the *capita* finds himself having to deal separately with each family, if indeed he takes that much trouble at all. Sometimes he may do so if a villager accompanies him to the camp in the hopes of adding strength to the village argument. I have seen this happen among the archers as among the net-hunters, in each case with a direct plea for all Mbuti to go to the village to help with the cotton harvest.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

throughout his life. It is also a question of friendship with the villager, but for him the relationship is further compelled by his belief in his own tribal lore, a compulsion not felt by the Mbuti. The Mbuti sometimes exploit this relationship with a *karé* as they may also do with their *kpara* for whom they feel no friendship, knowing that the strength of tribal lore, and the fear of supernatural sanctions upon themselves, will bring at least a grudging response.

Although essentially an individual relationship rather than a band relationship, failure on the part of an Mbuti to respond to his *karé* is considered by the villagers as a violation of village law, and can be made into a lineage/lineage or a band/village issue, but with predictable lack of success because of the absence of any effective agency of control. However, the attempt is sometimes made, and the band may at least be held responsible, in violation of *karé* brotherhood, for the actions of one of its members.

None of these formal relationships, then, brings about much effective economic exchange, and the political relationship is correspondingly ineffective. The mechanisms for political relationship are there, but their use is made impossible by the whole process of flux in Mbuti society. At the best those mechanisms are taken up and used momentarily when it is found to be mutually advantageous.

Individual Economic Relationships

There is, however, the last level, that of the nuclear family to the nuclear family, by which the band relates to a village. This is the effective level at which the bulk of economic exchange takes place among the Epulu Mbuti, and among most other net-hunting bands I have seen. In view of the flux that characterizes Mbuti society, it is indeed the only level that could provide any realistic basis of relationship.

It may not even necessarily be a family-to-family relationship. Individual members of the Mbuti family may go their own way and relate as such to village individuals. But once formed, these relationships are likely to remain fairly constant, for as long as the Mbuti family is hunting within that territory, or within reasonable reach. Several such attachments might be formed by the Mbuti, though generally not more than one in any one village. This leads to effective economic exchange but it provides no basis whatsoever for relating the band to the village, and it offers the villagers no more opportunity for control than they already have; namely, the fondness of the Mbuti for village luxuries.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4 ●
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

Similarly with the *nkumbi*, the Mbuti see submission as a means of acquiring status, which is necessary to them if they are to have any part at all in village society. They also see in it, and in witchcraft, a means of defeating the villagers on their own grounds, by proving their superiority. They can do this in the *nkumbi* by being excessively brave, either physically or by flaunting the taboos and thus exposing themselves to supernatural sanctions. They can achieve the same end similarly by pretending to be better witches than the villagers, and indeed the villagers often believe this to be the case.[1]

Nonetheless, the adoption of an institution, for whatever motive, brings a number of results, some of which will inevitably correspond to those expected and desired in the original context. This is a reality, a practical experience, and as such cannot help but somewhat alter the attitude of the Mbuti. In this way they may begin to partially believe in village magic or witchcraft or supernatural sanctions, at least insofar as such belief is not contradicted by the rest of their experience. This ambivalence is particularly marked when they are in the village, which is full of the unknown for the Mbuti, and is correspondingly much less pronounced in the forest. It is with this in mind that we should examine the magico-religious practices of the Mbuti, where there seems to be so much borrowing.

Magic is best defined, for all the tribes in the Ituri region, as the manipulation of material objects which in itself is believed to be the direct cause of certain results, with no invocation or spiritual intervention. It is essentially a natural and, from the local point of view, scientific procedure, having nothing to do with the supernatural.

The villagers have recourse to magical acts, so defined, for almost any circumstance over which they have no other form of control, yet which does not call for the invocation of supernatural intervention. Fertility of men, women and land may be secured by such processes, as may protection against thieves and adulterers; the weather may be influenced, illness may be cured. If the magic takes the form of an amulet to be worn, it may be secured from the local doctor; if it is something requiring more elaborate manipulation, such manipulation is generally considered a professional secret, and certain individ-

[1] The situation is somewhat analogous to that described by Lévi-Strauss (1955) for the Nambikwara chief who understood the principle of writing as a means of communication, and imitated it in order to heighten his status among his band and to intensify his measure of control. In each case the adoption of the institution was not for its original value, but to strengthen a somewhat precarious position. It is probable that the Nambikwara chief was thinking not only of his relationship with his own band but also of that with the European "band."

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

Two youths then take out the vines and shake them in all directions, liberally sprinkling anyone who happens to be standing by. Other youths are by now standing about, whistling on their honey whistles, a form of *madi* called *singbe*. The kindling is then stuck upright in the trenches, beside the *teka* vines, which have been replaced. Children help with this.

A hunter then places a single ember, apparently drawn from any fire, in a *mongongo* leaf and, having filled the center square with *mongongo* leaf stems, he places the coal on top. More kindling is added, crisscrossed much like a house of cards, each piece carefully placed by youths and hunters together. Without fanning, the kindling catches and a dense cloud of smoke is given off. An elder then brings over a bundle of old leaves that have been used for collecting honey, and places them near the fire. He waits until the smoke begins to dwindle, then directs the operation of placing the honey axes in the hearth, waiting for the blades to get warm and then using them to split some *toangbe* wood. The *toangbe* tree and the *tembu* tree are both good honey trees, but the *tembu* tree has to grow "old and fat" before it is favored by the bees.

Elders then carefully arrange the old leaves, adding more as necessary, in a large circle around the fire. Four *singbe* whistles are stuck in the ashes of the fire, pointing to the cardinals. While elders stand and shout, women gather and loudly clap their hands, and both hunters and youths kneel on the circle of leaves, facing in to the hearth, and begin pounding their fists rhythmically on the ground. The tempo increases to a maximum and is broken off with a sudden shout. This is repeated twice more, after which the hearth is abandoned and camp life resumes as though nothing had happened.

The Mbuti themselves are unable to give any satisfactory explanation of the performance, and it seems to combine elements of genuine magic (for they talk of the smoke attracting the bees and bringing honey to them) and of invocation of supernatural intervention (the *keti* are said to hear the pounding on the ground and will know that the Mbuti want honey). Whatever it may be thought to achieve, however, *angbe* (also *angbelu*) undoubtedly reiterates the division of the band into age groups, a division that is evident throughout the net-hunting season but is not so necessarily a part of activity during the honey season.

However regarded, Mbuti magic implies belief and is to that extent religious, no matter how much it may also be thought to have direct causal attributes, and the belief always supposes the benevolence of

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
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the power believed in. There is not a solitary instance to show the belief in a malevolent power against which protection must be sought. This is plainly different from village magic, which is essentially pragmatic and not in any way related to a central value system. We showed earlier (pp. 53–62) how magic does not provide a means by which the villagers can control the Mbuti. By a comparison of the two systems of magic we can see in effect how clearly they indicate major value differences despite initial outward similarities. In particular, the Mbuti attitude to the forest as a benevolent central value in their lives can be seen, and while in village magic we see only the lack of such a central value, when we examine witchcraft and sorcery we see its exact polar opposite.

And it will be remembered how (pp. 57–59) the Mbuti recognize the difference in attitudes toward magic, and put it to good use. The villagers regard Mbuti culture as impoverished in all respects, and the lack of the magic so abundant in village life is part of their argument. In making this lack of magic an excuse for the allegedly poor hunting that has deprived their *kpara* of meat, the Mbuti turn the situation nicely to their advantage, and turn the argument of the villagers against them. Thus although village magic and forest magic are different and distinct, the areas overlap in such a way as to deepen the opposition between the two worlds.

WITCHCRAFT

With witchcraft the situation is different, for this is something peculiar to the village world. Earlier (pp. 59–60) we showed some of the ways in which village witchcraft (often confused by the Mbuti with sorcery) impinges on forest life. Again, the villagers regard the lack of witchcraft in Mbuti culture as a sign of cultural poverty, and in their own belief in the power of witchcraft they seek to use it in their constant struggle to impose some kind of control over the hunters. However, the Mbuti again make use of the village belief in witchcraft for their own ends, using it as a means of escape from situations in which they would otherwise be culpable and stand to lose a good exchange relationship.

In their own forest world, however, witchcraft plays no part, except insofar as it is recognized as a useful device for deflecting blame, and is thus occasionally used, tongue in cheek, to resolve a dispute. As indicated in the foregoing chapter, the prime objective in the settle-

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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CHAPTER 15

Principles of Organization (1)

THE FOREST CONTEXT

While reaffirming our introductory belief that this single-band study is the first essential in the wider study of the Mbuti hunters and gatherers, and that such a study cannot warrant generalizations of wide or final value, some generalization is obviously called for and must now be made to provide a basis for future comparative studies. While we have, in the section on "The Forest World," outlined the nature of Mbuti activity in domestic, economic, political and religious life, insofar as it is lived by the Epulu band of net-hunters, we now have to draw this picture together in an organizational framework. Within this the principles discerned should be specific enough to explain the unity and integrity that plainly persist despite the remarkable degree of flux, and at the same time be general enough to have wider application beyond this specific situation.

In the absence of central government it is customary to look for principles of organization in the kinship system of a society, and although the society in question does not conform to the expectations of Steward (1955) or Service (1962), and although its departure from their norm of patrilineality[1] cannot be demonstrably shown to be due to "evolution" or even to changes wrought by the influx of village cultivators, there is still much to be gained from a study of Mbuti attitudes to kinship. Embedded in their terminology, simple as it is, are attitudes expressed in behavior in all realms of their life.

We have seen how little emphasis is placed on kinship, except at the level of the nuclear family, where there is a strong affective element between young children and parents. This is most clearly seen in the terminology of interpersonal address and reference, which is

[1] Service was more perceptive in shifting the emphasis from lineality to locality, but his generalizations still lack substantiation.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

602 561 • 121 If we forget the usual genealogical associations of kinship and think in a strictly classificatory manner, we do have here an institutionalization of a kinship relationship and the beginnings of a kinship system, for we have already seen the vital importance of age in determining one's realm of activity and responsibility among the Mbuti, and how each of the four levels of *apua'i* act together in distinction from the other levels. But there seems little point in persisting any further with the term "kinship system" in this instance unless we define kinship so as to contradict its very fundamental significance in the more highly structured societies. With the Mbuti we are dealing with kith rather than kin, and the terminological division of the society into four age levels is best thought of as completely divorced from kinship except, and it is a vital exception, insofar as the nuclear family, and the ideal relations that should pertain among its members, are taken as the model relationships for the band. With this in mind, let us examine other relationships implicit in the terminology.

601 561 562 It is noticeable that the terminology distinguishes age levels, and only distinguishes between the sexes at the parental level (*ema* and *eba*). Children, siblings and grandparents (in their widest classificatory sense) are considered without emphasizing any male/female polarity. Sex differentiation can be made, and where necessary this is done, but only in the same rather roundabout way in which any genealogical connection can be traced. In order to differentiate an *apua'i* who is merely a friend from one who is a uterine brother, one has to add the expression "from one stomach" to designate the latter. Similarly, one can add the terms designating male or female to any term of address or reference except that of mother or father, where it is not needed.[2]

562 462 This avoidance of sex differentiation is consistent with the interdependence between the sexes that is so characteristic of Mbuti economic life, and with the egalitarianism that exists between them in the realm of government. A woman is in no way the social inferior of a man, and there is little absolute division of labor along sex lines. [224] [222] Among the net-hunters in particular, and among the archers during the *begbe* beat-hunt, cooperation between the sexes during the hunt

[193] [2] I have come across instances where a vowel or consonant change has been said to indicate the sex differential (as happens in some Sudanic Languages), such as *tata* and *taté* for male and female grandparent, *apua'i* and *amua'i* for male and female sibling, but there was no consistency in the practice. Wherever it was necessary to make the difference, there was need for stress, and this was in any case better achieved by the more dramatic addition of *moko* or *kali*. At the level where this most frequently is done, a male child would thus be distinguished from a female child: *miki a moko, miki a kali.*

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

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the crosscutting vertical loyalties of a lineal kinship system. The territorial band is the only reasonable answer.

602 621 561 121 [114]

We use the term "territorial" rather than bilateral, for the latter term still overemphasizes considerations of vertical descent. This is to negate the whole functional value of the generational system as used by the Mbuti, who use it to establish firm bonds between age mates, and to assign different and essential tasks to different age levels, thus avoiding the remotest chance of centralization of power or authority. But we certainly do not use the term as does Steward (1955, 143), who uses it "to designate certain primitive societies which consist of many unrelated nuclear or biological families." Steward implies that relationship (he does not state what degree of relationship) not only is of no concern, but that it does not exist between member families of the band. It would be difficult to find a more composite Mbuti band than that of the Epulu, yet a glance at Table 4, giving the band membership at the close of 1957, shows that every single individual, representing some twenty-two different lineages, is "related" by clear consanguineal or affinal bonds to every other. No individual stands alone, though the relationship may sometimes be remote.

621 602 121 582

And most certainly while stating that age and territory are more effective principles of organization than kinship, we do not deny that kinship is recognized. We are merely stating that social interaction among the Mbuti is based on generation and territory. A system, to deserve the term, must be effective in action, and we have seen how seldom kinship relationships are called into account among the Mbuti, the major occasion being a proposal of marriage. There the concern with kinship is not so much in terms of the politico-economic implications of the marriage, as a clear-cut consideration of lineal distance. The stated prohibition is against marrying on the side of either the mother or father, but so long as the memory of the elders can trace no connection, there is no further concern.

58 621 602 [561]

Sister-exchange marriage preserves the unity of the *apua'i*, and indeed enhances it when, as can happen in the composite band, the two couples reside side by side. The lack of marriage and divorce ritual does not indicate any lack of concern for one's age level, for one always marries within that level and so is never lost to it, but it is another symptom of the general lack of concern with kinship, this time with affinity rather than lineality. A marriage is effected by living together; divorce is effected by one or other spouse simply going to live

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

patterns produce "features typical of the patrilineal band," for the patterns differ from group to group, and within each group from one time of the year to the next. At one time or another, each group, net-hunters or archers, will be able to present bands that resemble patrilineal units; at other times the same bands will be utterly nonlineal, even though the exploitative pattern may not have changed.

Nonetheless, the environment itself does play a vital structural role, and while not necessarily determining the exploitative activity, or the dependence of the Mbuti upon it, is determinant of their value system so long as that dependence is felt. For, feeling that way, regarding the forest as *ema* the provider, and as *eba* the ruler, believing that any deviation from the way of life ordained for them by the forest would be fatal, the Mbuti effect what control they can over their lives by a constant effort to "rejoice the forest."

Conceiving that the forest is intelligent, the Mbuti conceive that it is like them, and consequently the ideal that they hold for themselves is the ideal they attribute to the forest. While age and territory are effective in organizing the band, dividing it into significant units, binding it together as a whole, and determining the general nature of interpersonal relationships, the territory enlarged into the forest seen as mother and father acts as the ultimate sanction of all behavior. There are certain recognized forms of behavior that lead to a "good" band, and others that lead to a "bad" band. The appropriate positive and negative sanctions are formulated in such a way that all actions are either pleasing to the forest—leading to the ideal of *ekimi*, or quietness—or displeasing to the forest, leading to *akami*, or noise. (*Ekimi* and *akami* are, in practice, essential elements in determining the success or failure of the hunt.)

Thus it is recognized that cooperation is essential for the success of the hunt, so it is stated that laziness and aggressiveness and disputatiousness are all displeasing to the forest, leading to *akami* (as indeed they do). The *akami* is their own reward, for *akami* destroys the hunt and "kills" the Mbuti. On the contrary, to hunt well, to have a full stomach, to sing and dance, is to please the forest and lead to *ekimi*, or "quietness," and *ekimi* in turn brings good hunting, and is associated with singing and dancing and feasting.

Here is a very clear example of the closest possible association between religious belief and ethical behavior. The distinction made by Radcliffe-Brown (1952, p. 172) between law, morality and religion, upheld by legal sanctions, sanctions of public opinion, and religious

2: Turnbull E-8 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

sanctions, does not hold good for Mbuti society, where the three principles are inextricably fused. One might be able to talk of law, even if law implies sanction by force, for the Mbuti believe that the forest has such power and force and will use it. Indeed, in their experience it does, for transgression is met with the force of *akami*, which kills. This is thought of as a very direct and practical response on the part of the forest as the law. On the other hand, public opinion can hardly be said to exist, for there is no public spokesman, and every opinion on behavior is expressed in terms of pleasing or displeasing the forest. Such public action as may be taken—ridicule or ostracism—is taken in the name of the forest. Exile is literally being sent to the forest to meet it directly. Religious sanctions are not differentiated from any others; the threat is the same—noise and displeasure.

Ultimately, then, in our consideration of territory, despite the obvious practical values involved and a certain extent of ecological determination of behavior patterns, the territory as a principle of organization must be regarded as a religious principle. Indeed, life itself, for the Mbuti, can almost be regarded as a ritual designed to please the forest and secure *ekimi*. There is, as noted, an almost total absence of magic, and the only ritual that can be truly considered as such, and is not otherwise a necessary daily activity, is song. We have seen that song is designed specifically to rejoice the forest, and to draw its attention to its children, but beyond this and its reinforcement, through musical technique, of the values of age and cooperation, there is nothing particularly remarkable about it as a social institution.

It is only when we come to death that there is a marked departure from the normal tenor of life, and a ritual, the *molimo*, that might be regarded as a ritual in the Durkheimean sense of recreating society and reaffirming the social sentiment. While any interpretation of religious ritual of this kind is highly questionable, the attempt has to be made.

Leaving aside the "legal" aspect of the *molimo* when it appears in the early hours of the morning to wreak havoc in the camp, there are few rituals that could be more explicitly concerned with the "recreation of society" in the most literal sense. Death is the most final and inescapable of all crises, and for it there is no remedy. But it threatens more than the life of the individual; it threatens the continuity of the band, and so threatens the ritual of life by which the forest is pleased. Death itself is recognized as deriving from the forest, so is accepted

[P.282]

CHAPTER 16

Principles of Organization (2)

THE VILLAGE CONTEXT

The principles of organization that have begun to emerge with reference to the forest world of the Mbuti only become fully comprehensible when we relate them to the village world. Gluckman (1960) gave some general but highly pertinent indications of a somewhat similar situation involving a dichotomy in the lives of Africans in North Rhodesia and Nyasaland. In that situation the conflict, or rather the opposition, was between the ancestral land and the town. The land represented subsistence to some extent, but primarily security; the town was a place to raid for money. While Gluckman did not see any "detribalization" involved, he pointed out that the African is tribalized, in towns and in rural areas, in two different ways, tribal attachments in urban areas having to work within a setting of urban associations: "Hence the African in rural areas and in town is two different men; for the social situation of tribal home and of urban employment determine his actions and associations, within the major politico-economic system covering both areas" (1960, p. 11).

Gluckman refers to the consequent social and mental conflict, and sees "considerable resolution of this conflict through the separation of the spheres of activities" (1960, p. 11). In assessing the Forest/Village relationship we see a similar situation, with the village being regarded as a place to raid, creating numerous social and mental conflicts which again are largely resolved by separation in what I have called a system of indigenous apartheid. There is more to it than that, however. We cannot suppose, however complete the barrier, that the Mbuti live an utterly schizophrenic existence; even within the opposition there must be order. Nor can we suppose that the order comes from a mere dilution of forest values when the Mbuti come to the village; it is rather, as Gluckman says, that the same values have to work within a setting of urban (village) associations.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

Indeed, certain elements of the forest system can only be explained in relationship to the village context, such as the excessively fluid composition of the band and the almost paranoid attitude to a single villager passing through a hunting camp, sufficient to suspend the vital and central, all-important *molimo* festival, even at its height, or transform it into a village-style parody. This quite singular feature has found no explanation in terms of either the village alone or the forest alone. Let us then briefly review the forest system, and look at it again in the village context. The following elements have emerged as having the greatest structural significance:

1. THE BAND is the basic unit, its membership being influenced by economic rather than kinship considerations. Constant association and cooperative compatibility outweigh kinship even within the band in regulating the process of fission and fusion. This latter process is related to the annual honey season, but it is not determined by it. The over-all size of the band, or of its subsections, is, however, determined by ecological factors resulting in a maximum of about thirty nuclear families for a band, and a minimum of three families for a subsection. Although the band is nonlineal, the network of consanguineal and affinal interpersonal relationships is recognized to link all members, so that the terminology, while referring to age levels regardless of actual or fictive kinship, still has the same affective qualities of kinship terminology, the term referring to age mates (*apua'i*) being the most widely used, and the most effective.

With the best will in the world, it is not possible to apply the kind of analysis suggested by Lévi-Strauss (1958) for following his argument (that the biological family makes a poor starting point); further we must also abandon the affinal family and the system of affective relationships that Lévi-Strauss saw to pertain there. For among the Mbuti affective relationships are determined more by age than by kinship, consanguineal or affinal. We simply cannot follow a set formula that takes no account of the age factor. Thus *f*/*s* is positive when *s* is a child.[1] It is negative when *s* is a youth, becomes less strained when *s* becomes a hunter, but only approaches positive again when *f* becomes an elder. In other words the relationship is positive as long as *f*/*s* are not in adjacent age levels. The greatest friction arises when *s* approaches adulthood and is about to become a hunter, a signal for the retirement of the father into elderhood. It

[1] *f* = father; *s* = son; *m* = mother; *d* = daughter; *b* = brother; *z* = sister.

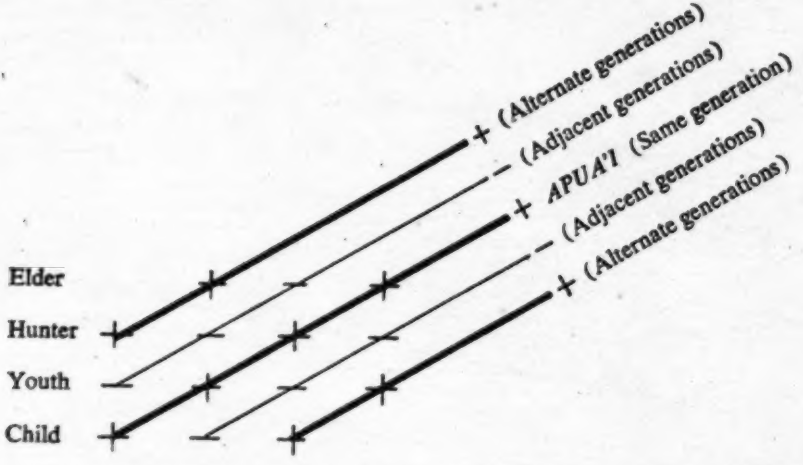
2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

602 would be difficult to notice much difference in this respect between
• 121 *f/s* and *mb/zs*.
561
571 *b/z* and *h/w* are both positive, though *b/z* swings to negative
593 briefly at the youth's age level, friction being an inevitable potential of the sister-exchange practice, loose as it is. *m/s*, almost as uniformly positive as *h/w* throughout all changes in age level, might be said to reach a double-positive stage when *s* becomes a hunter, and is certainly pronounced during his youth—just at the time, in fact, when his relations with his father are at their worst.

If we consider the age factor we get something like the following (allowing for the fact that there is no very precise way of determining attitudes, particularly among the somewhat volatile Mbuti):

	mb/zs :	*b/z* ::	*f/s* :	*h/w*
When *s* is a child:	+	+	+	+
youth:	−	−	−	+
hunter:	−	+	−	+

602 Or, if set out in a different form, considering only age, the thick
121 lines joining positive relationships, the thin lines joining those points
561 at which the relationships are negative, we see most clearly the cor-
593 respondence of attitudes to age. Only when the sex difference is considered—i.e., allowing for negative *b/z* and positive *m/s*—is the symmetry spoiled.[2]



[2] The system, and the results, might be considerably improved by replacing the inflexible positive and negative signs with a scale analysis.

Despite all of which, and the lack of structurally significant rules of inheritance of property or status (names sometimes being handed on down to alternate generations, but not necessarily so), and with no apparent concomitant inheritance of status, certainly not of property, there is a recognition of the patrilineage, and a tendency toward patrilocality.[3]

2. AGE is the prime factor in dividing the band into significant units, the significance being seen in terms of domestic, economic, legal and governmental responsibilities. Each age level has a distinct role that contributes to the total social order, and in all these aspects of life it is consistently of greater import than kinship. The consistency still remains as firm in religious life, and following the ultimate crisis of death. The dead belong, as it were, to yet another age level, and one that is almost dissociated from the four levels of the living. Thus after death there is no familial concern for the dead, as seen in the complete lack of concern with ancestral ghosts. Far from disclaiming the dead relatives through fear[4], the Mbuti continue to regard them with affection insofar as they regard them at all. Their preference for forgetting the dead reflects an attitude toward death, not to the individual dead.

Each age level has its own way of earning the respect of the band as a whole, by fulfilling what is referred to as its "duty." Thus the duty of children is to grow up in good health. The duty of youths is to sing, flirt and play—and help the parental level. The duty of the hunters is to hunt and, oddly enough, to create *akami*, or noise, and the duty of

[3] We have to assert that there is, for the moment, no evidence that the territorial band is a product of special considerations, as suggested by Steward and Service (in whose terminology the band is "composite"). In particular we must reject, for the Mbuti, the assertion of Service (1962, p. 49) so convenient to his argument for virilocality, that all such societies were, before they were "so thoroughly subjugated," characterized by fighting between "unrelated groups," resulting in "fears, dangers and enmities." Also it is necessary to deny his assertion that such societies are "enclaved among more powerful neighbours—and cannot but lose or be heavily punished for any breach of the peace." If anything, in the Ituri, it is the villages that are enclaved. Further gross misrepresentation, perhaps owing to paucity of reliable material, is offered by Service (1962, p. 108) in the bald statement: "The composite band, on the other hand, is obviously a product of the near-destruction of aboriginal bands after contact with civilization. In all cases there is conclusive evidence of rapid depopulation by disease which, when combined with ending of hostilities among the aborigines themselves under the dominance of the common enemy, resulted in the merging of previously unrelated peoples." The evidence now available, while not denying the possible validity of such historical reconstruction, in no way supports it. Indeed, there is evidence to the contrary.

[4] For an example of precisely the opposite situation, see Beattie (1960, p. 76), where concern for kinship obligations during life is continued after death, resulting in a desire to disavow relationships.

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with excessive vigor. It would be an insult as well as *mbafu* (stupidity) to take all the trouble to rejoice the forest by song and then displease it by not having a particularly vigorous hunt. A month of this leaves the stoutest Mbuti more than a little tired, so although the remedy for *akami* lies in their hands, through song, at all times, it can be arduous and, since it is *mota*, it can be dangerous. Thus the supernatural sanction on social behavior is in no way lessened: the Mbuti all state that the forest, in its manifestation through the morning *molimo*, may punish and kill.

The system as described can be seen easily enough to maintain internal order, and it can also be seen well enough how it operates, as an essentially forest-centered system based on age and forest values, to maintain separation from a village system based on kinship and anti-forest values—for one of the cardinal village beliefs is not simply that the village is better than the forest, but that the forest is the source of all evil. But now we have to see how these same elements that make for social order in the forest (the nonlineal band, age, territory, noise and song) operate within the village framework.

Winter (1956) describes the relationship between the eastern extension of the Mbuti, the few who live among the Amba on the Uganda/Congo border, and the Amba themselves. Each group denigrates the other's mode of existence, yet they evidently live in the closest association with each other, in what Winter calls symbiosis. More important, he describes how two Mbuti groups are fitted into the Amba lineage structure, but only partially so. They are both attached to Bulibuli lineages, each to a maximal lineage as a whole; yet they do not share full and equivalent relationships as Bulibuli with the other lineages of the same clan. Winter mentions that they stand in a joking relationship with only one of the maximal lineages.

Joking relationships are generally thought of as pertaining between individuals who stand in a specific relationship to each other, involving both proximity and distance. The proximity is thought of in terms of kinship, the distance is due to a difference, if not a conflict, of interests. The relationship can involve considerable amity and mutual cooperation, but nonetheless contain elements of hostility, particularly in its outer expression (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952, p. 91). The exact formularization varies from situation to situation, tolerating or compelling joking behavior, on a symmetrical or asymmetrical basis.

The essential elements of this form of relationship are all present

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in the Mbuti/Villager situation. The basis of the proximity and distance elements does not rest on kinship, and the relationship is as much between the two groups as it is between individuals, otherwise the situation conforms to Radcliffe-Brown's model quite clearly—*viz.* (1952, p. 95): "The show of hostility, the perpetual disrespect, is a continual expression of that social disjunction which is an essential part of the whole structural situation, but over which, without destroying or even weakening it, there is provided the social conjunction of friendliness and mutual aid."

In the Mbuti/Villager situation the relationship appears to be symmetrical and permissive, though both sides do occasionally take offense, the village side even sometimes taking counteraction. The ineffectiveness of taking offense or action, however, only serves to heighten the characteristic "social disjunction," and there is no doubt that beneath the display of hostility and disrespect there is cooperation, and even considerable amity. Considering the completely opposed value systems of the two worlds, this is, indeed, the only way in which the two peoples could meet and still retain a separate identity. The reasons for the meeting taking place at all, as we have already seen, are circumstantial—the historical invasion of the forest by the villagers, and their use of the Mbuti as guides; the continued parasitism of the Mbuti upon the villagers long after the original need for cooperation had gone; the contemporary mutual convenience of economic exchange; sheer territorial propinquity. These reasons do not lead automatically or easily to a structured relationship, particularly when the values of the two peoples are so divergent, so while a form of joking relationship helps to stabilize the alliance, maintaining the combination of Radcliffe-Brown's "conjunctive and disjunctive components," it is not by itself enough.

We have seen the methods by which the villagers have sought to further stabilize the situation, through a formal economic-exchange system, a fictive parallel-kinship system, and through introduction to village supernatural sanctions by establishment of magico-religious bonds through *karé* blood brotherhood and *nkumbi* initiation. Any one of these, had it worked, would have reduced the Mbuti to subordination, yet this plainly has not been done. The defense of the Mbuti has lain in their own indigenous forest system, which works not only to maintain internal cohesion but also to maintain the utmost possible structural distance from the village world while allowing a minimal amount of "mutually convenient" economic exchange.

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Let us look, then, at these same structural elements, having just considered them in their forest context, and place them in a village context.

1. THE TERRITORIAL BAND, while in no way lessening the efficiency of the hunting band, and while still preserving band unity through the concept of territory and the use of an age-level system, presents to the village system only disunity and flux. The flux that is a natural part, it seems, of the seasonal fission and fusion of all Mbuti bands renders it next to impossible for any form of village authority to be exerted over the Mbuti, either as bands or as individuals. The preference of the Mbuti for marrying into distant bands, and of thenceforth maintaining an exchange of visits and even of membership with these bands, directly counters the authority of the villagers, which is based on localized lineages and is therefore itself localized. The Mbuti are as likely as not to exchange visits with each other over distances that exceed not only the territorial limits of the clans of the village tribes but even of the tribes themselves, between which there are no political relationships except hostility. In view of the lengths to which the Mbuti carry the joking relationship, if it can be called that,[6] it is not surprising that they find it convenient to maintain their bands in such constant and otherwise unnecessary flux. The Mbuti constantly raid village plantations, openly ridicule the villagers, and steal from under their noses, unless the villagers are particularly generous. I have not met a single villager, even among those most popular with the Mbuti, who has not complained of being "eaten," and complained at the same time of the impossibility of applying legal sanctions over tribal boundaries.

2. AGE divides the hunting band into significant horizontal sections crosscutting all lineal considerations.[7] The emphasis on age is con-

[6] The Mbuti in their own parlance regard the village as a place to hunt and eat. They say "in the forest we hunt, in the village we hunt" (*subandura su wendi, subananji su wendi*), also, equally frequently, "We eat animals, we eat villagers" (*Sule banyama, sule Batubanji*"). Hunting calls for trickiness, cunning, using tactics appropriate to the game, often imitating it and assimilating, temporarily, its personality. Such tactics in the village include bringing in a certain amount of meat as bait, performing some service, and occupying a generally subservient position. When asked why he forced his son to take part in the *nkumbi* initiation at the hands of the villagers, one father said, simply, "When we hunt elephant we cover ourselves with elephant dung" (*Su wendi bambongu su pati mavi nda'bo*).

[7] Turner (1957), following Gluckman (1954), finds among the Ndembu, a society that is mobile and fissionable, also lacking the more formal political institutions, an essential crosscutting of opposed groups. He also found, as we have found, that (Turner 1957, p. 289) ". . . links of kinship and of political and economic co-operation *per se*

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2
The Good Death of Balekimito

AFTER TWO YEARS' further preparation at Oxford I felt ready to return to the Ituri, to try and understand just what it was that made the People of the Forest what they were, what made them so very different from the villagers all around them, what made them seem to adopt village ways with such enthusiasm, only to abandon them with utter unconcern the moment they left the treeless confines of the village and returned to the forest.

If you land at Lomé, you drive first of all along the coast of Togo and Dahomey, where the Atlantic surf pounds day and night on